

# Threads of Power

## *Clothing Symbolism, Human Salvation, and Female Identity in the Illustrated Homilies by Iakobos of Kokkinobaphos*

MARIA EVANGELATOU

The two twelfth-century codices (Vaticanus graecus 1162 and Parisinus graecus 1208) with six Marian homilies by the monk Iakobos of the Kokkinobaphos Monastery are well known to scholars for their superb artistic quality and iconographic peculiarities. They are also among the most lavishly illustrated Byzantine manuscripts to have survived to the present.<sup>1</sup>

1 The primary publications on the illustration of the two manuscripts are: C. Stornajolo, *Miniature delle omilie di Giacomo Monaco (cod. Vat. gr. 1162)* (Rome, 1910); H. Omont, *Miniatures des homélies sur la Vierge du moine Jacques (ms. Gr. 1208 de Paris)*, Bulletin de la Société française de reproductions de manuscrits à peintures 11 (Paris, 1927); I. Hutter, "Die Homilien des Monches Jakobus und ihre Illustrationen, Vat. Gr. 1162 und Paris. Gr. 1208" (Ph.D. diss., Universität zu Wien, 1970); I. Hutter and P. Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar des Mönchs Jakobos von Kokkinobaphos: Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1162; Einführungsband und Faksimile*, Codices e vaticanis selecti 79 (Vatican City and Stuttgart, 1991). The latest and most comprehensive study on these two manuscripts is by K. Linardou, "Reading Two Byzantine Illustrated Books: The Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts (Vaticanus graecus 1162, Parisinus graecus 1208) and Their Illustration" (Ph.D. diss., University of Birmingham, 2004), which, unfortunately, I have not been able to consult. I thank K. Linardou for informing me that she examines the relationship of word and image, the question of precedence between the two manuscripts, some aspects of the Kokkinobaphos workshop and the redating of the Paris copy, the question of patronage, and the purpose of the Kokkinobaphos codices. The publication of this thesis will make an important contribution to our knowledge of all these subjects. In the meantime Linardou has published the following three articles: "The Couch of Solomon, a Monk, a Byzantine Lady and the Song of Songs," in *The Church and Mary, Papers Read at the 2001 Summer Meeting and the 2002 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical*

Scholars have dated the two Kokkinobaphos homiliaries to the second quarter of the twelfth century (during Iakobos's lifetime), and have related them to a very active patroness of the imperial family, the sebastokratorissa Eirene, sister-in-law of the emperor Manuel Komnenos and wife of sebastokrator Andronikos.<sup>2</sup> The

*History Society*, ed. R. N. Swanson, Studies in Church History 39 (Trowbridge, 2004), 73–85; "The Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited: The Internal Evidence of the Books," *Scriptorium* 61, no. 2 (2007): 384–407; "Depicting the Salvation: Typological Images of Mary in the Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts," in *The Cult of the Mother of God in Byzantium*, ed. L. Brubaker and M. B. Cunningham (Aldershot, 2011), 133–49. The text of Kokkinobaphos homilies 1–3, 5, and the first part of 6 are published in PG 127:544–700. The 4th homily and the second part of the 6th are published by Hutter, "Die Homilien," vol. 2, appendix, 1–55.

2 On the dating of the text and the manuscripts see J. C. Anderson, "The Illustrated Sermons of James the Monk: Their Dates, Order, and Place in the History of Byzantine Art," *Viator* 22 (1991): 69–120, esp. 85; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 11–17; Linardou, "Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited." On the connection of the manuscripts to the court environment and their possible association with Eirene, see Anderson, "Illustrated Sermons," 96–101; R. S. Nelson, "Theoktistos and Associates in Twelfth-Century Constantinople: An Illustrated New Testament of A.D. 1133," *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 15 (1987): 53–78, esp. 75–76; I. Spatharakis, "An Illuminated Greek Grammar Manuscript in Jerusalem," *JÖB* 35 (1985): 231–43, esp. 242–43. On Eirene, see E. Jeffreys, "The Sebastokratorissa Eirene as Literary Patroness: The Monk Iakobos," in *XVI. Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress: Akten*, 2/3 (Vienna, 1983) = *JÖB* 32, no. 3 (1982): 63–71; eadem, "Who Was Eirene the Sebastokratorissa?" *Byzantion* 64 (1994): 40–68; eadem, "The Sebastokratorissa Irene as Patron," in *Female Founders*



FIG. 1. Cod. Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 14v. Iakobos the monk with St. Chrysostom and St. Gregory of Nyssa, the first miniature of the Paris Kokkinobaphos (not included in the Vatican codex). The caption below the image reads "Iakobos the monk." By permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, © 2014 BnF.





FIG. 2. Cod. Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 3v (similar image in cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 2v). Christ's Ascension. Frontispiece to the first homily, on Mary's conception. By permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, © 2014 BnF.





FIG. 3. Cod. Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 8v (similar image in cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 5r). Assembly of saints for the celebration of the feast of the conception of the Virgin. By permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, © 2014 BnF.





FIG. 4. Cod. Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 21v (similar image in cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 16r). Anna prays in her garden (bottom register) and meets Joachim at the gate (top register). By permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, © 2014 BnF.



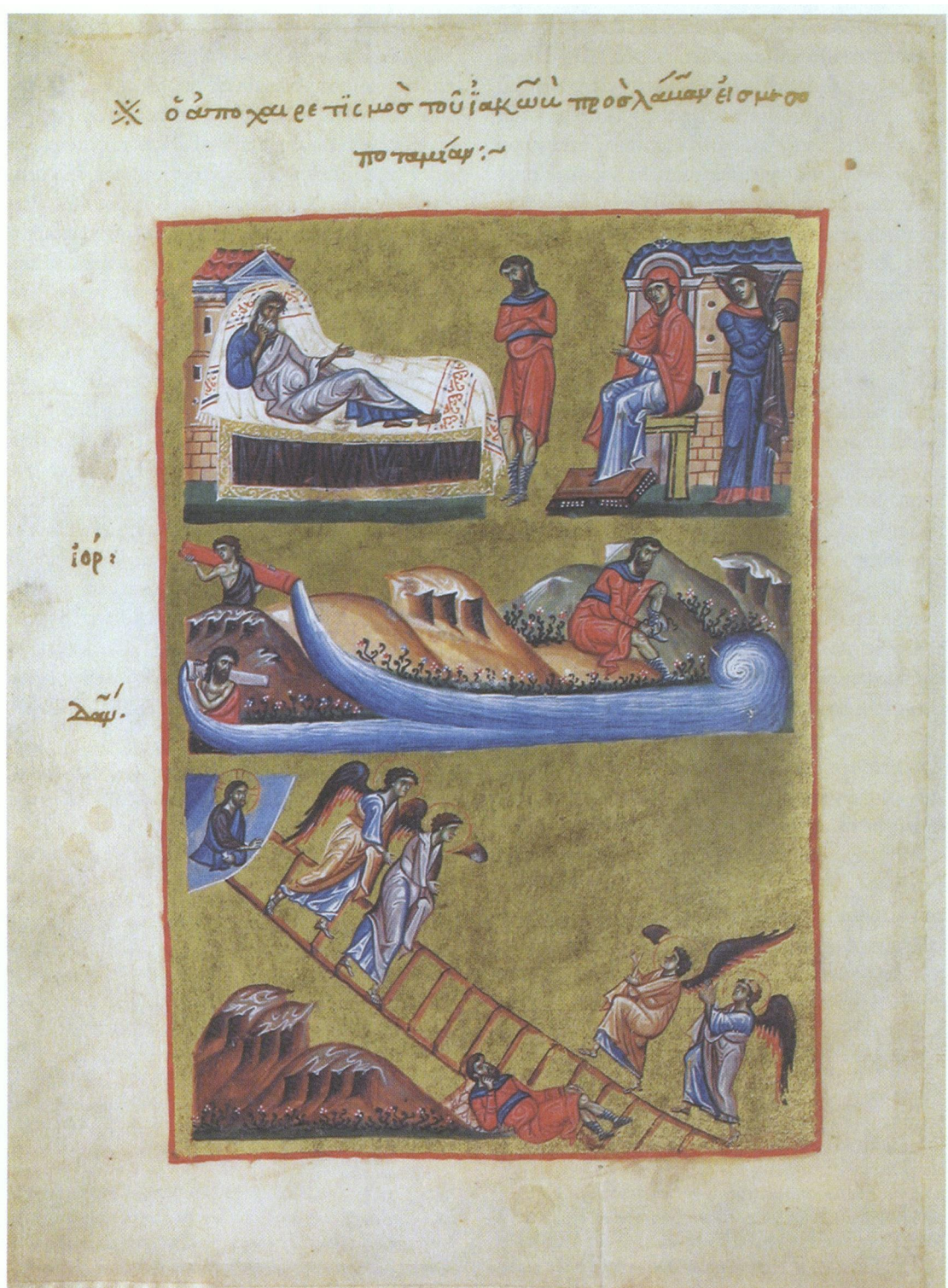


FIG. 5. Cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 22v (similar image in cod. Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 29v). Jacob greets his parents before departing for Mesopotamia, crosses the Jordan, dreams of the heavenly ladder. Frontispiece to the second homily, on Mary's nativity. By permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, all rights reserved, © 2014 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



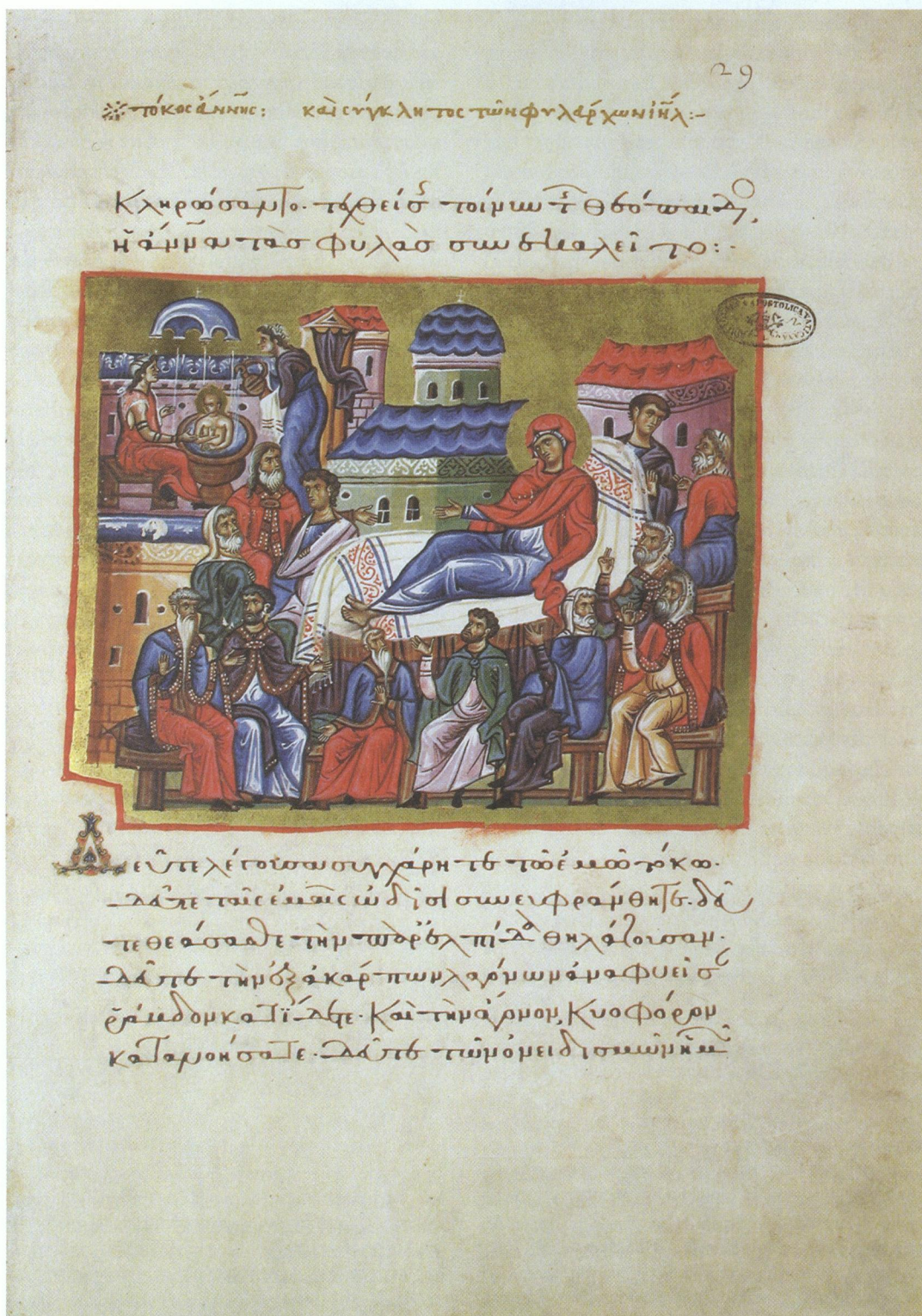


FIG. 6. Cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 29r (similar image in cod. Paris. gr. 38v). Mary's nativity: Anna celebrates her motherhood among the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel; the Virgin's first bath. By permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, all rights reserved, © 2014 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.





FIG. 7. Cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 35r. The fall and the expulsion from paradise. By permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, all rights reserved, © 2014 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.





FIG. 8.  
Cod. Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 47r. The fall  
and the expulsion from paradise. By  
permission of the Bibliothèque nationale  
de France, © 2014 BnF.



FIG. 9.  
Mosaic from the Cappella Palatina,  
Palermo, Sicily (mid-twelfth century).  
God questions Adam and Eve after they  
ate the forbidden fruit. By permission of  
Alfredo Dagli Orti / Art Resource, NY.





FIG. 10. Cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 36v (similar image in cod. Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 49v). The lamentation of Adam and Eve, the offerings of Cain and Abel, Abel's murder. By permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, all rights reserved, © 2014 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.





FIG. 11. Cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 48v (similar image in cod. Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 66v). The Anastasis: Christ descends into the underworld to reject the sinful (top) and liberate the just, leading them to paradise. Mary is venerated in paradise by Adam and Eve. By permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, all rights reserved, © 2014 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



FIG. 12.

Mosaic from the katholikon of Nea Moni, Chios (mid-eleventh century). The Anastasis. Photo from the photographic archive of the Third Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities, by permission.



FIG. 13.

Cod. Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 69v (similar image in cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 50v). The Virgin and Child are enthroned in paradise and venerated by angels and prophet. By permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, © 2014 BnF.







FIG. 14. Cod. Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 73v (similar image in cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 54v). Moses and the burning bush. Frontispiece to the third homily, on Mary's Entrance to the Temple. By permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, © 2014 BnF.





FIG. 15. Cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 82v (similar image in cod. Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 109v). Christ on Solomon's Couch, surrounded by the sixty valiant ones. Frontispiece to the fourth homily (on Mary's betrothal to Joseph). By permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, all rights reserved, © 2014 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.





FIG. 16. Cod. Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 123r (similar image in cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 92v). Mary in the Temple, protected by invisible powers from the machinations of the devil. By permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, © 2014 BnF.



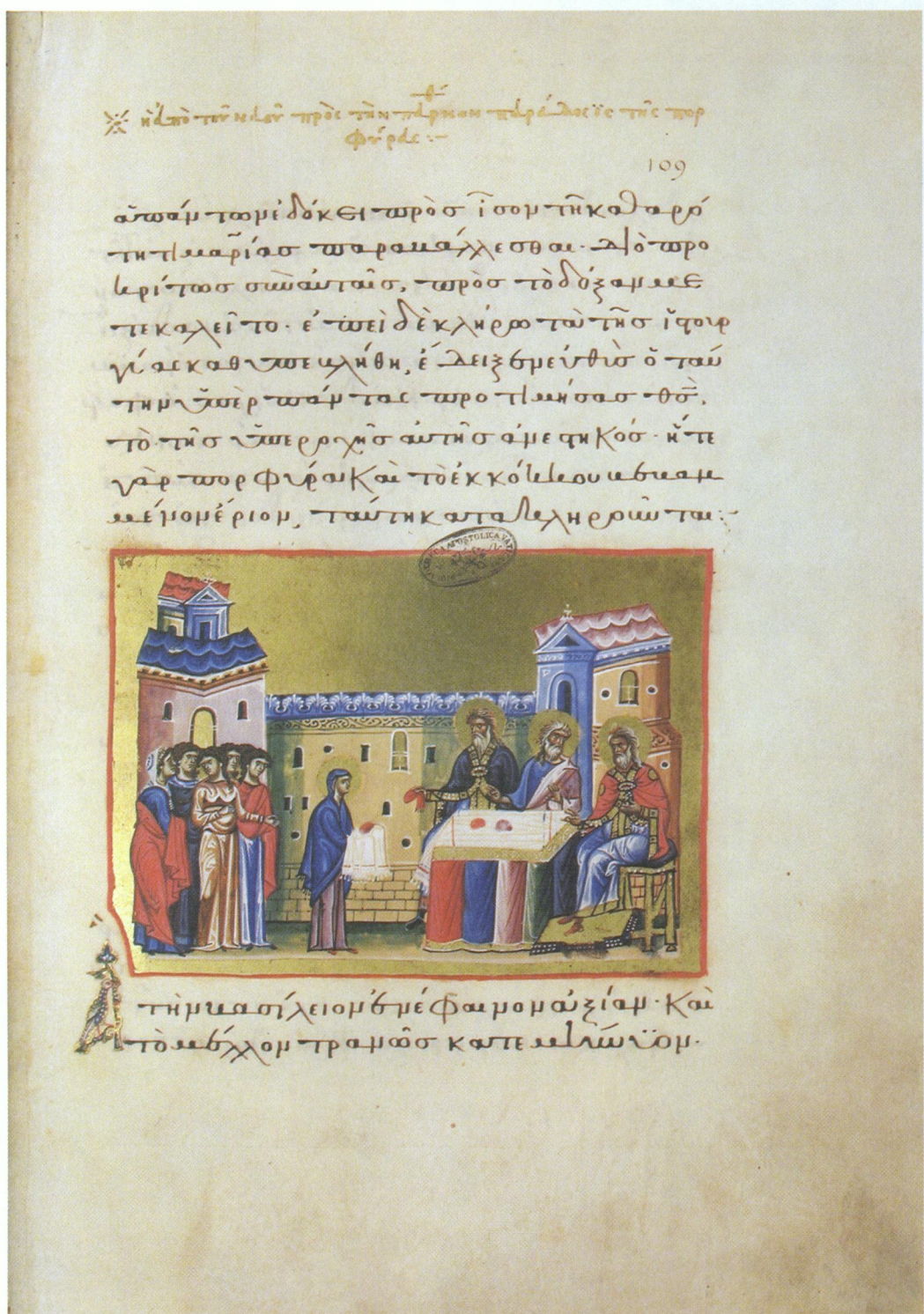


FIG. 17. Cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 109r (similar image in cod. Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 147v). The temple priests deliver the purple wool to the Virgin. By permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, all rights reserved, © 2014 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.





FIG. 18. Cod. Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 149v (similar image in cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 110v). Gideon and the fleece. Frontispiece to the fifth homily, on the Annunciation. By permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, © 2014 BnF.



FIG. 19.  
Cod. Paris. gr. 1208,  
fol. 157r (similar image  
in cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol.  
115v). Gabriel arrives at  
Nazareth, James (youngest  
son of Joseph and author  
of the Protevangelion)  
watches over Mary.  
By permission of the  
Bibliothèque nationale  
de France, © 2014 BnF.



FIG. 20.  
Cod. Paris. gr. 1208,  
fol. 160v (similar image  
in cod. Vat. gr. 1162,  
fol. 118r). Gabriel's first  
indoor salutation to Mary.  
By permission of the  
Bibliothèque nationale  
de France, © 2014 BnF.







FIG. 21. Cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 119v (similar image in cod. Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 162r). Isaiah's vision of the burning coal, God revealed behind the veil of heaven. By permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, all rights reserved, © 2014 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



FIG. 22.

Cod. Paris. gr. 1208,  
fol. 168v (almost identical  
miniatures also appear on  
folios 165v and 171v; similar  
images in cod. Vat. gr. 1162,  
folios. 122r, 124r and 126r).  
Mary's dialogue with  
Gabriel. By permission of  
the Bibliothèque nationale  
de France, © 2014 BnF.



FIG. 23.

Cod. Paris. gr. 1208,  
fol. 177v (similar image in  
cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 130v).  
Gabriel returns to heaven,  
after the annunciation;  
Mary spins the purple thread  
while angels  
venerate the throne of the  
Pantokrator. By permission  
of the Bibliothèque  
nationale de France,  
© 2014 BnF.







FIG. 24. Cod. Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 181v (similar image in cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 133v). The tabernacle with the ark, the tablets of the law, the jar of manna, the cherubim and Aaron's rod; Moses performs the selection of the high priest (Aaron) through the miracle of the flowering rod. Frontispiece to the sixth homily, on the delivery of the purple to the temple, the visitation, Mary's trial and absolution from charges of unchastity. By permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, © 2014 BnF.



FIG. 25.  
Cod. Paris. gr. 1208,  
fol. 193r (similar image  
in cod. Vat. gr. 1162,  
fol. 142r). The Virgin  
delivers the purple thread  
to Symeon. By permission  
of the Bibliothèque  
nationale de France,  
© 2014 BnF.



FIG. 26.  
Mosaic from the  
katholikon of the  
Monastery of Hosios  
Loukas, Greece (eleventh  
century). Christ's  
presentation to the  
temple. Photo by  
Vasilis Marinis.







FIG. 27. Cod. Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 200r (similar image in Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 147r). Mary rests on her way to Elizabeth's house; the personification of the Earth emerges to venerate the Mother of God. By permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, © 2014 BnF.



FIG. 28.

Cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 149r.

The visitation of Mary to Elizabeth's house. Zachariah with a maid on the left, James (youngest son of Joseph) on the right. By permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, all rights reserved, © 2014 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.



FIG. 29.

Cod. Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 203r.

The visitation of Mary to Elizabeth's house. Zachariah with a maid on the left, James in the center. By permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, © 2014 BnF.





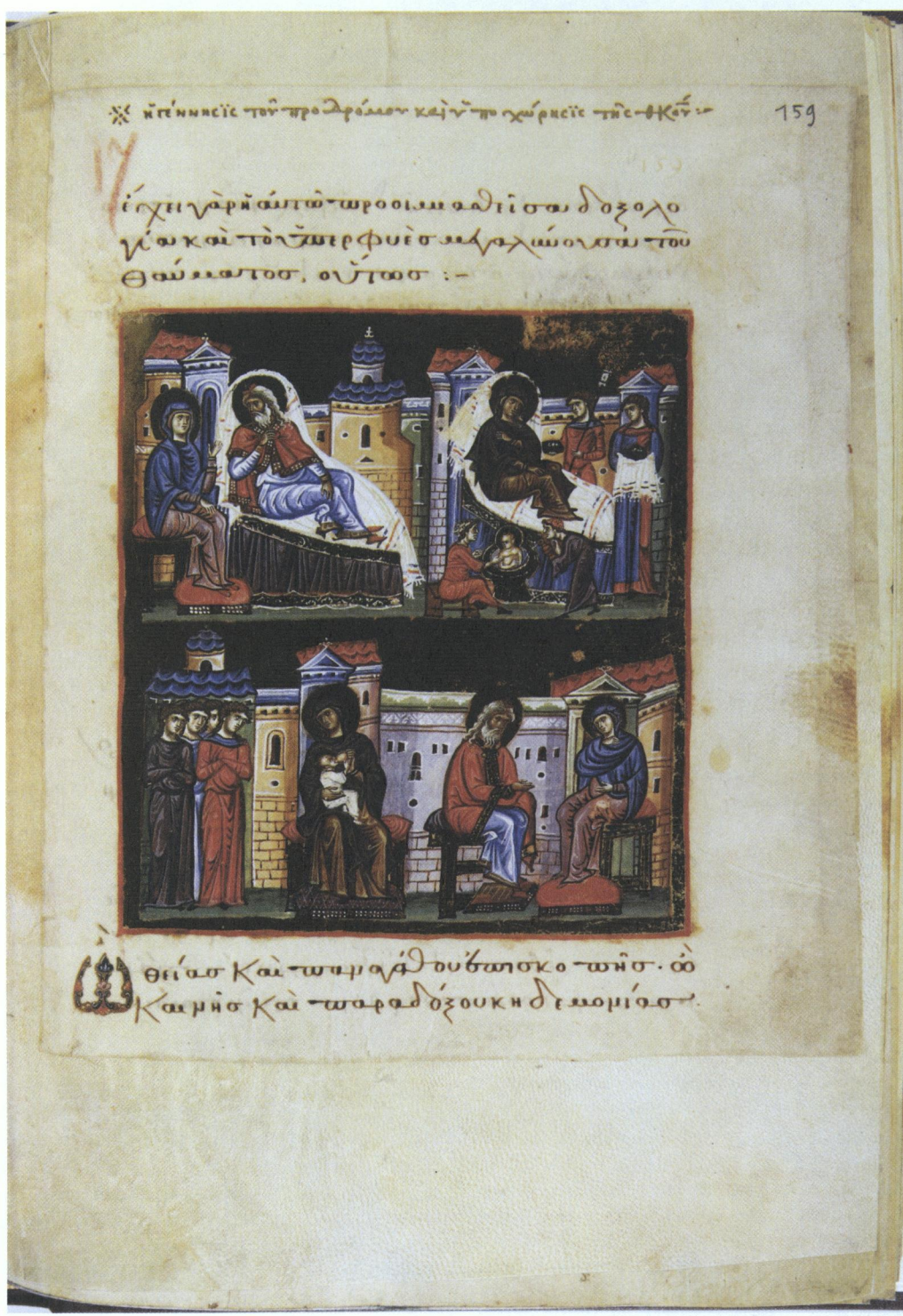


FIG. 30. Cod. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 159r. The Nativity of St. John the Baptist: Mary with Zachariah (top left), the nativity and first bath, Elizabeth breastfeeds John next to attending maids, Zachariah praises the Virgin before her departure (bottom right). By permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, all rights reserved, © 2014 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. (The background appears dark due to the light reflection on the gold leaf of the miniature.)



homiliaries, which preserve an almost identical set of illustrations, speak to issues ranging from the development of Marian iconography to manuscript production in twelfth-century Constantinople, and from visual exegesis and the relationship of word and image to the social, cultural, and aesthetic function of religious imagery in the imperial court of Byzantium.

In this article I consider Marian iconography and visual exegesis along with the sociocultural ramifications of gender ideology. In the first part of my analysis I examine a group of miniatures that narrate the Virgin's life from the moment she is tasked with spinning the purple material destined for the new veil of the Jewish temple (end of the fourth homily, fig. 17) until she delivers the thread back to the temple (beginning of the sixth homily, fig. 25).<sup>3</sup> My aim is to show that the purple thread spun by the Virgin during the annunciation is a symbol of the incarnation both in the text and in the images of the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries. I focus on just a few miniatures related to this theme; the most complex compositions will be treated in a forthcoming monograph on the symbolism of spinning, weaving, and clothing in Byzantine culture.<sup>4</sup> My

in *Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. L. Theis, M. Mullett, and M. Grünbart with G. Fingarova and M. Savage, *WJKg* 60–61 (Vienna, 2011–12), 177–94. Andronikos was born ca. 1108–9 and died in 1142. Eirene was born ca. 1110–12 and died ca. 1151–52. For the genealogy and history of the Komnenian family see K. Varzos, *Ἡ γενεαλογία τῶν Κομνηνῶν, Βυζαντινὰ κείμενα καὶ μελέται* 20, 2 vols. (Thessalonike, 1984), esp. 1:357–79 (Eirene and her husband Andronikos); F. Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène (1118–1143) et Manuel I Comnène (1143–1180)* (Paris, 1912), esp. 212–13. The collection of letters that Iakobos wrote to Eirene (cod. Paris. gr. 3039) has been recently published by E. Jeffreys and M. Jeffreys, *Iacobi Monachi Epistulae*, CCSG 68 (Turnhout, 2009), with a useful introduction on Eirene and her relationship to Iakobos (xi–lxv). I thank the authors for generously offering me a copy of this important publication.

3 In order to provide the reader with a sense of the content and succession of images proper to the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries, the miniatures are reproduced here in the order in which they appear in the manuscripts rather than in the order in which they are discussed in the article. Due to copyright restrictions it was necessary to use a selection of images from both the Vatican and the Paris manuscripts, rather than primarily from the Vatican manuscript, which is the focus of this study and was produced first. Since the Paris codex in most cases copies the Vatican codex closely, this will give the reader a sense of the first Kokkinobaphos manuscript's actual cycle. When scenes are substantially different from one codex to another, both are reproduced for comparative purposes.

4 The provisional title of this monograph is *Weaving Christ's Body: Clothing, Femininity, and Sexuality in the Marian Imagery of*

analysis complements the work of scholars who have suggested a symbolic reading of the purple spun by the Virgin in Byzantine images of the annunciation.<sup>5</sup> My

*Byzantium*. It will be a comprehensive study of Byzantine literary and visual material and comparative material from Western Europe that considers the use of spinning, weaving, and clothing as symbols of the incarnation and of human salvation. The connections between these symbolic motifs and ancient Graeco-Roman traditions, biblical, patristic, liturgical, ceremonial, and folkloric sources, as well as gender roles and ideals, will be extensively discussed. I thank the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study and Dumbarton Oaks for supporting this project with postdoctoral fellowships in 2006–7 and 2009–10 respectively.

5 See M. Evangelatou, "The Purple Thread of the Flesh: The Theological Connotations of a Narrative Iconographic Element in Byzantine Images of the Annunciation," in *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium: Studies Presented to Robin Cormack*, ed. A. Eastmond and L. James (Aldershot, 2003), 261–79, where this subject is systematically treated; reference is made to previous literature on the symbolic interpretation of the purple thread in two Byzantine icons of the annunciation by scholars such as H. Belting, A. Weyl Carr, and B. Pentcheva (262–63). See also N. P. Constas, "Weaving the Body of God: Proclus of Constantinople, the Theotokos, and the Loom of the Flesh," *JEChrSt* 3, no. 2 (1995): 164–94, and more extensive treatment of the same subject in idem, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Homilies 1–5, Texts and Translations*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 66 (Leiden and Boston, 2003), chap. 6 (315–58). These two publications are extremely useful for any discussion of the symbolism of the purple thread spun by the Virgin, even though the author neither examines systematically the Byzantine literature beyond Proklos, nor investigates the symbolism of the purple thread in Byzantine art generally. His work has inspired I. Kalavrezou and A. Walker to propose a symbolic reading of the purple thread in all Byzantine images of the annunciation (without further analysis). See I. Kalavrezou, *Byzantine Women and Their World* (New Haven, 2003), 158, cat. no. 83, entry by Walker and Kalavrezou. Z. Urbach, "Dominus possedit me... (Prov. 8, 22): Beitrag zur Ikonographie des Josephszweifels," *Acta Historiae Artium* 20 (1974): 199–266, esp. 210, proposes that the purple the Virgin spins in medieval images is a symbol of Christ's flesh, but he does not offer any arguments in support of this interpretation. I thank K. Linardou for drawing my attention to this article. Hutter, "Die Homilien" (n. 1 above), 348–56, discusses the incarnational symbolism of Mary's purple thread in relation to various textual, visual, and ritual traditions focusing on veils as instruments of divine revelation. The purple thread and the temple veil are also mentioned as symbols of the incarnation by B. Popović, "The Most Precious Thread in Byzantium and Medieval Serbia," in *Material Culture and Well-Being in Byzantium (400–1453): Proceedings of the International Conference (Cambridge, 8–10 September 2001)*, ed. M. Grünbart et al. (Vienna, 2007), 193–98. The author focuses more on the symbolic and social role of purple in imperial, royal, and ecclesiastical attire. I thank N. Dionysopoulos for drawing my attention to this article and B. Popović for giving me a copy before it was published. Reference to the purple thread as a symbol of the incarnation is also made in N. Constas, "Symeon of Thessalonike and the Theology of the



exploration of the sophisticated visual exegesis in the manuscripts also raises questions about the relationship of word and image, author and painter, codex and user. I conclude that the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts place exceptional emphasis on the Theotokos as the producer of the veil of salvation, the human body of the Logos: both in words and images, thread and fabric metaphors concerning the incarnation appear with a density and elaboration unparalleled in any other surviving Byzantine monument. This observation contributes to a closer examination of the identity and intentions of the commissioner of the Kokkinobaphos codices, and to an assessment of the collaboration of the author and the miniaturist in their program.

Since textile production was a quintessential female activity in Byzantium, in the second part of the article two interrelated issues are examined through the lens of gender dynamics. On the one hand, I consider the identity of the commissioner and how her gender and imperial connections might be related to the depiction of Mary as the spinner and weaver of Christ's purple mantle of flesh. On the other hand, I discuss the tensions surrounding the presentation of femininity in manuscripts produced by men (author and miniaturist) about and for women (Mary and Eirene) and the possible development and resolution of these tensions. This approach provides an opportunity to examine how notions of gender were both reflected in and constructed through the production and use of these manuscripts. I investigate how the sophisticated interrelation of text and image can accommodate multiple, shifting meanings that are complementary even when they are contradictory. Through case studies I suggest this polyvalence is a result and a component of the complex dynamics that characterize Byzantine society and culture, in which images played a central role in the development, experience, and expression of personal and communal identities.

---

Icon Screen," in *Thresholds of the Sacred: Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West*, ed. S. Gerstel (Washington, D.C., 2006), 163–83. See also references to the incarnational symbolism of Mary's purple thread by L. Cross, "St Mary in the Christian East," *Australian eJournal of Theology* 9 (March 2007): 1–9. For a discussion of the symbolism of the thread in annunciation iconography (without emphasis on the purple material) see also G. McMurray Gibson, "The Thread of Life in the Hand of the Virgin," in *Equally in God's Image: Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. J. Holloway, J. Bechtold, and C. Wright (New York, 1990), 46–54.

## PART ONE CLOTHING SYMBOLS OF THE INCARNATION

---

A principal guide in my analysis of the visual material is the text of the Kokkinobaphos homilies, which includes a variety of clothing metaphors related to the incarnation and to the salvation of mankind.<sup>6</sup> The proliferation of such metaphors in the Kokkinobaphos homilies and throughout the religious literature of Byzantium suggests a cultural consensus that was bound to be recorded both textually and visually. In other words, the author of the homilies, the miniaturist, and the users of the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts must have been aware of the symbolic meaning of threads and veils in texts and in images concerning the incarnation. Revealing and addressing this awareness are recurring images of raw, spun, or woven wool—a fleece, a bundle of wool, a thread, a skein, or a veil—that appear as main or secondary elements in consecutive compositions, from the scene of the entrusting of the purple material to the Virgin, to the scene in which she delivers the thread back to the temple (figs. 17–25). Seen as components of a symbolic theme in which the incarnation is presented as the clothing of the Logos in the purple garment of flesh, these images allow a deeper appreciation of the manuscripts' subtle visual language. They reveal carefully chosen subject matter and iconography and point toward layers of meaning that provide valuable insight into the manuscripts' original context and purpose. The exceptional emphasis of the Kokkinobaphos homilies on the purple thread and veil as symbols of the incarnation also suggests that the commissioner was deeply invested in the cultural associations of purple as a signifier of status and of textile production as emblematic of female virtue. Both these interests characterize Eirene Sebastokratorissa, considered the most likely person to have commissioned the luxurious Kokkinobaphos codices.

6 It is well known that Iakobos used various sources in his homilies and often copied extensively from them, but a detailed study of this issue is still unavailable (see Jeffreys and Jeffreys, *Iacobi Monachi Epistulae* [n. 2 above], xxi). In contrast, his complex compilation of sources in his letters to Eirene is well documented in the recent edition by Jeffreys and Jeffreys. No matter how close he stays to his sources and how many they are, I still consider Iakobos the author of his texts and not just a compiler of collected passages: he was responsible not only for the copious selection of citations, but also for laboriously integrating them into a meaningful whole.



## Setting the Stage: Mary Receives the Purple Wool

Since it is often more constructive to reveal potential questions than to propose an answer with claims to certainty, I begin this article with an analysis that considers possibilities without aiming to be conclusive. It is true that inconclusive evidence occasionally leads to over-interpretation, but in the Kokkinobaphos miniatures the combination of text and image suggests that under-interpretation is the bigger risk.

The importance of purple as a symbol of the incarnation is prominently introduced in the text and images of the Kokkinobaphos homilies when Mary receives the purple wool destined for the new temple veil. The miniature shows the priests delivering the material to the Virgin (fig. 17).<sup>7</sup> According to the apocryphal second-century *Protevangelion* of James, a source used extensively by Iakobos of Kokkinobaphos in his Marian homilies,<sup>8</sup> only virgins from the tribe of David could be entrusted with spinning the wool for the new temple veil.<sup>9</sup> Mary's inclusion among them proves both her Davidic ancestry and her purity, which befit the mother of the Messiah.<sup>10</sup> The *Protevangelion* also mentions that through the casting of lots, the Virgin alone was assigned the purple and scarlet wool, colors with royal associations that reinforce her status. The same source reports that when Gabriel appeared to the Virgin, she was spinning the purple.<sup>11</sup> This narrative detail has significant symbolic connotations: the color identified as purple in the ancient sources and in

my analysis (the Greek πορφύρα and the Latin *purpura*) is more precious and prestigious than scarlet and was an important imperial signifier in Roman and Byzantine culture. It is also closer to the actual color of blood. All of this renders purple a particularly multilayered symbol of the incarnation: a reference to the investment of the Heavenly King with the mantle of human flesh, woven by one of King David's daughters, and destined to be sacrificed on the cross, soaked in Christ's blood, for the salvation of humankind.<sup>12</sup>

The precious purple dye produced by the juice of the murex shell can range from dark blue or aubergine tones to lighter reds, but the darker hues were most prized in Byzantium and are attested in textiles and representations of emperors.<sup>13</sup> However, in most Byzantine depictions of the annunciation, Mary holds red wool that looks more scarlet than purple.<sup>14</sup> This is

7 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 109r (Stornajolo, *Omellie di Giacomo monaco* [n. 1 above], pl. 45); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 147v (Omont, *Miniatures des homélies* [n. 1 above], pl. XVIII). This scene is discussed by Hutter, "Die Homilien," 157–59. For the iconography of the scene, see J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie de l'enfance de la Vierge dans l'empire byzantin et en Occident*, 2 vols. (Bruxelles, 1964), 1:182–83.

8 E. Jeffreys, "Mimesis in an Ecclesiastical Context: The Case of Iakobos Monachos," in *Imitatio—Aemulatio—Variatio: Akten des internationalen wissenschaftlichen Symposions zur byzantinischen Sprache und Literatur* (Wien, 22.–25. October 2008), ed. A. Rhoby and E. Schiffer (Vienna, 2010), 153–64, esp. 154.

9 For the Greek text of the *Protevangelion*, see C. Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha* (Leipzig, 1876), 19–20 (chap. 10). English translation in P. A. Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, 4 vols., Bollingen Series 70 (Princeton, 1966–75), 1:76–77.

10 Evangelatou, "Purple Thread of the Flesh," 262, with references to previous scholarly literature.

11 Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha*, 22 (chap. 11).

12 For the frequent connection between the Virgin and the purple as symbol of the incarnation in Byzantine literature see S. Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος ἐν τῇ ὑμνογραφίᾳ* (Paris, 1930), 3–4 (ἀλουργίς), 64 (πορφύρα, πορφυρίς); J. Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie de Byzance* (Paris, 1976), 76–77; Evangelatou, "Purple Thread of the Flesh," 265–66, esp. nn. 34–36. See also the sources mentioned in n. 5 above. On the imperial associations and various other meanings of the purple dye in antiquity and the medieval period see *La porpora: Realtà e immaginario di un colore simbolico; Atti del convegno di studio, Venezia, 24 e 25 ottobre 1996*, ed. O. Longo (Venice, 1998), especially A. Carile, "Produzione e usi della porpora nell'impero bizantino," 243–69. I thank A. Stouraiti for drawing my attention to the proceedings of this conference. See also W. T. Avery, "The *Adoratio Purpureae* and the Importance of the Imperial Purple in the Fourth Century of the Christian Era," *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 17 (1940): 66–80; V. M. Reinhold, *History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity* (Brussels, 1970).

13 The famous imperial portraits of Justinian and Theodora in San Vitale, Ravenna, are just one example. In addition to Carile, "Produzione," see the technical analysis and various references to ancient sources on the imperial purple by J. Edmonds, *The Mystery of the Imperial Purple Dye* (London, 2000).

14 Although I have not conducted a detailed statistical analysis of all Byzantine annunciation images in order to verify the percentage of red versus purple wool in Mary's hands, in most cases I know it is rendered in red tones. There are some notable exceptions, of which the following are characteristic examples. On fol. 4r of the sixth-century Rabbula Gospels, Mary's clothes and the wool bundle she holds are the same purple color, so that the one appears to be a continuation of the other, emphasizing how the body of the mother offers material for the weaving of Christ's mantle of human flesh. A good color image may be found in C. Cecchelli, G. Furlani, and M. Salmi, *The Rabbula Gospels: Facsimile Edition of the Miniatures of the Syriac Manuscript Plut. I, 56 in the Medicaean-Laurentian Library* (Olten and Lausanne, 1959). In the sixth-century apse



a matter of pictorial convention: the brighter red helps the material stand out against the darker colors of the composition, especially those used for Mary's clothes, which are often blue, dark red, or purple. Blood is similarly depicted as bright red in Byzantine images, even though its color is closer to the darker tones of the imperial purple. There can be no doubt that Byzantines considered the red wool held by Mary in the annunciation to be the purple mentioned in the *Protevangelion* and in the rich literary tradition that employed this imperial color as a symbol of the incarnation: in hymns and homilies Mary was constantly hailed as the purple dye or wool, or as the one handling this precious

substance for the production of the mantle of the incarnation, Christ's human body.<sup>15</sup>

In the Kokkinobaphos homilies Mary is always depicted handling red wool when the accompanying text mentions purple. Indeed, the inscription to the scene of Mary receiving the wool from the temple priests reads: "The delivery of the purple from the temple to the Virgin."<sup>16</sup> The scarlet wool that, according to the *Protevangelion*, was also entrusted to the Virgin when the lots were cast, is mentioned in the homily but not in the inscription. In both manuscripts this omission is found again in the inscriptions to the miniature of the Virgin delivering the spun thread back to the temple (fig. 25).<sup>17</sup> The scarlet is similarly omitted in the inscription of the scene of Mary receiving a bundle of red wool in the fourteenth-century mosaic at the Chora Monastery in Istanbul, which states, "The servants having brought the wool for the virgins to take, the purple fell to Mary's lot."<sup>18</sup> In both the Kokkinobaphos miniatures and the Chora mosaic, the emphasis of the inscriptions on the purple wool could have been intended to draw attention to the material's symbolic significance.

Symbolic references to the purple are often made in the Kokkinobaphos homilies and in the literary tradition they follow. In his first four homilies Iakobos describes the Virgin as the purple garment that will dress the divinity of the Logos,<sup>19</sup> or as the true veil of the temple through which God will be revealed to the world.<sup>20</sup> At the end of his fourth homily, he uses the

mosaics of the Euphrasian Basilica in Poreč, Mary is dressed in purple (dark brown/aubergine) clothes and the wool she handles in the annunciation scene is made of tesserae of the same color and very dark red. The chalice-like shape of the basket suggests the wool is a symbol of the incarnation that is reenacted in the Eucharist. Mary holds the long bundle of wool between her thighs and against her womb as if it were an umbilical cord. For images and an analysis of this mosaic with special attention to symbols of the incarnation (Mary's belt and veil), see A. Terry and H. Maguire, *Dynamic Splendor: The Wall Mosaics in the Cathedral of Eufrasius at Poreč*, 2 vols. (University Park, 2007), 1:100–102, 133–36; 2: fig. 97. In the Annunciation miniature on fol. 55v of the ninth-century Pantokrator Psalter, Mary's clothes and David's chlamys are dark brownish red, which could be intended to represent a purple hue. The wool Mary holds comes out of a gold chalice with the same dark red interior (connecting the ancestor David with his daughter Mary and the womb she offers for Christ's incarnation). The wool itself is rendered in dark blue, like the cushion on Mary's golden throne. I assume the color here refers to another hue of imperial purple, which could also be taken to allude to the heavenly origin of Mary's son (the same blue, now mostly flaked off, appears on Gabriel's clothing). For a color photo see *Οι Θησαυροί του Αγίου Όρους*, ed. S. Pelekanidis, P. K. Christou, Ch. Mauropoulou-Tsioumi, S. N. Kadas, and C. Katsarou (Athens, 1979), 3:138, fig. 194. On fol. 3r of the ninth-century cod. Paris. gr. 510, Mary is dressed in purple robes of dark brownish red and blue tones. The same two colors are used to depict the basket with wool between Mary and Gabriel, a symbol of the Virgin's body as container of the material of the incarnation. The wool itself is rendered in blue tones, similar not only to Mary's dress but also to the background of the image (perhaps another reference to the heavenly provenance of the Virgin's son). The basket with wool stands on an altar, further reinforcing the references of the purple material to Christ's incarnation as the path to his salvific sacrifice. For a color image of the whole folio see J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, "Die byzantinische Kunst nach dem Ikonoklasmos bis zur Mitte des 11. Jahrhunderts: Miniaturen, Elfenbein, Goldarbeiten, Email, Glas, Kristall, Stoffe," in *Kaiserin Theophanu: Begegnung des Ostens und Westens um die Wende des ersten Jahrtausends*, ed. A. von Euw and P. Schreiner (Cologne, 1991), 64, fig. 1.

15 See n. 12 above.

16 Ἡ ἀπὸ τοῦ ναοῦ πρὸς τὴν Παρθένον παράδοσις τῆς πορφύρας. Hutter, "Die Homilien" (n. 1 above), 157. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

17 See below, n. 106.

18 Ἐνεγκόντες οἱ ὑπηρέται ταῖς παρθέναις / τοῦ λαβεῖν ἔρια ἔλαχε τῇ Μα/ριάμ τὸ πορφυροῦν. Underwood, *Kariye Djami* (n. 9 above), 1:76.

19 Homily 1.2, PG 127:545D (the conception of the Virgin in Anna's womb is hailed thus: "Today, the advent of the King of all is heralded, as the royal garment of purple [Mary] is being woven"). Homily 1.4, PG 127:549A (the Logos will be dressed in the royal purple of humanity made by the blood of Joachim and Anna, i.e. the Virgin's flesh). Homily 2.11, PG 127:584C (Mary's swaddling clothes are blessed for holding in them "the royal purple," the Theotokos).

20 Homily 3.9, PG 127:608D (during Mary's entrance to the temple, the veil [καταπέτασμα] is lifted to make way for the living veil of the Logos, the Virgin [τὸ ἐμψυχὸν τοῦ Λόγου καταπέτασμα]). Homily 4, Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 101r (Mary is the "royal purple, . . . the intelligible veil,



purple that Mary would spin for the temple veil as a symbol of the incarnation: “Since the distribution of the work for the spinning of the thread [destined to the temple veil] was done by casting lots, God, who favored her [the Virgin] above all others, showed her superiority right away. For the purple and the wool that was dyed with kermesberry [scarlet] are assigned by lot to her, clearly revealing her royal status and the things to come in the future. *This was a sign that Christ God the king of all would wear the purple garment of the flesh woven from her and would elevate her as queen of all creation.*”<sup>21</sup> Later, Iakobos presents a symbolic interpretation of the temple veil in line with the exegetical tradition initiated in Hebrews (especially 6:19–20, 10:19–20) and further developed by various church fathers:<sup>22</sup> the veil dividing the holy place from the holy of holies in the Jewish temple (τὸ καταπέτασμα) is a type of Christ’s body, through which the heavenly kingdom is revealed to

the tabernacle of the high priest” “... τὴν βασιλείον ἀλουργίδα, ... τὸ νοητὸν καταπέτασμα, τὴν τοῦ μεγάλου ἀρχιερέως σκηνήν...”)

21 Emphasis mine. Vat. gr. 1162, fols. 109r–v. “Ἐπεὶ δὲ κλήρω τὰ τῆς ἰστουργίας καθυπεβλήθη, ἔδειξεν εὐθὺς ὁ ταύτην ὑπὲρ πάντας προτιμήσας Θεὸς τὸ τῆς ὑπεροχῆς αὐτῆς ἀνεστηκός· ἦ τε γὰρ πορφύρα καὶ τὸ ἐκ κόκκου βαμμένον ἔριον ταύτῃ κατακληροῦνται, ἃ τὴν βασιλείον ἐνέφαινον ἄξιαν καὶ τὸ μέλλον τρανῶς κατεμήνυνον. / Ἐδήλου δὲ τοῦτο, ὡς ὁ παμβασιλεὺς Χριστὸς ὁ Θεὸς τὴν τῆς σαρκὸς ἀλουργίδα ἐξ αὐτῆς ἀνυφάνας ἐνδύσεται καὶ βασιλίδα τῶν ἀπάντων κτισμάτων αὐτὴν ἀναδείξειεν.”

22 See, for example, John Chrysostom, *In epistolam ad Hebraeos*, PG 63:27, 229, *In memoriam martyrum* (spurious), PG 52:829–31; Kosmas Indikopleustes, *Christian Topography*, ed. W. Wolska-Conus, *Topographie chrétienne*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1968–73), 2:47; John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei*, 96, 4.23:61–64, ed. P. B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* (Berlin and New York, 1973), 226; Photios of Constantinople, *Epistulae*, 125:21–48, ed. B. Laourdas and L. Westerink, *Photii patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia*, 6 vols., Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Leipzig, 1983–88), 1:163–64; Photios of Constantinople, *Fragmenta in Lucam*, PG 101:1226. For a discussion of this exegetical tradition see H. Kessler, “Through the Temple Veil: The Holy Image in Judaism and Christianity,” *Kairos* 32–33 (1990–91): 53–77, esp. 67–77; idem, “Medieval Art as Argument,” in *Iconography at the Crossroads: Papers from the Colloquium Sponsored by the Index of Christian Art, Princeton University, 23–24 March 1990*, ed. B. Cassidy (Princeton, 1993), 59–70; O. Hofius, *Der Vorhang vor dem Thron Gottes: Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Hebräer 6,19 f. und 10,19 f.* (Tübingen, 1972); Evangelatou, “Purple Thread of the Flesh” (n. 5 above), 263–64, nn. 14–17 (with more primary sources). See also Conostas, *Proclus of Constantinople* (n. 5 above), 325–29, for the metaphorical use of the temple veil by Iakobos of Kokkinobaphos. See also the many comments by Conostas, “Icon Screen” (n. 5 above).

humankind.<sup>23</sup> This exegesis implicitly refers to the fact that Christ took his human nature from his mother: the Virgin’s production of the thread for the temple veil is a telling prefiguration of her weaving the true καταπέτασμα, her son’s body, in her womb. Indeed, Iakobos comments that by spinning the thread for the temple veil, the Theotokos was being prepared for the mystery of the incarnation.<sup>24</sup>

Irmgard Hutter has commented on the symbolism of the purple in the scene of the delivery of the purple wool to the Virgin, relating it to Mary’s royal status and to the interpretation of the veil as Christ’s body. She concluded that “die Purpurszene ist als Vorspiel und Typos der Inkarnation zu verstehen.”<sup>25</sup> It is possible that a prominent iconographic detail in this composition further highlights this layer of meaning. The white cloth in which the Virgin holds the purple might be a sign of reverence for the precious material, but could it also indicate that the wool is the venerable body of Christ, and that it must be handled with utmost respect? Nicholas Conostas has suggested that in this miniature “Mary’s hands, draped with a white linen cloth, receive the purple as if it were a Eucharistic particle.”<sup>26</sup> Although the purple thread is prominently presented as a eucharistic symbol in the sixth homily (discussed below), when Mary returns the spun yarn to the temple, this is not the case in the fourth homily. In addition, in both Byzantine tradition and liturgical commentaries, participants in the Eucharist are expected to receive Christ’s body with uncovered hands and the officiating priests holds the paten and chalice containing the Holy Gifts with bare hands, as did Christ at the Last Supper.<sup>27</sup> Even if we assume that

23 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 109v. “Τὸ γὰρ τοῦ καταπετάσματος ὄνομα πολὺσημόν τε ὄν καὶ διαφόροις ἐφαρμόζον τοῖς πράγμασι τὸ πάντων κυριώτατον, ὦν ἐδήλου, ἡνίκα τοῦ αὐτοῦ τε γὰρ δηλοῖ τὸ ἀποτέμνον ἐνδον τὰ τοῦ ναοῦ ἅγια, τὸν τε οὐρανὸν ἐμφανίζει καὶ τὴν σάρκα τοῦ σωτῆρος μηνύει. Ἄπερ, οἶμαι, διὰ τὸ τὰ ἐνδον ἀποτεριχίζειν οὕτως εἰρῆσθαι· ὁ μὲν γὰρ οὐρανὸς τὰ ἅγια, ἡ δὲ σὰρξ τὴν θεότητα, ἃ δὴ τὸ κατασκευαζόμενον, ὑπετύπου.”

24 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 109v. “Λαβοῦσα τοῖνυν ἡ πανακέρατος βασιλὶς τὸ κληρωθὲν ἔργον πρὸς τὸ τοῦ καλουμένου μνηστῆρος δωμάτιον ἴετο. Ἐνθα τῆς αὐτοῦ ἐργασίας ἐχομένη πρὸς τὴν τοῦ μυστηρίου κατηρτίζετο λειτουργίαν.”

25 Hutter, “Die Homilien” (n. 1 above), 158–59.

26 Conostas, *Proclus of Constantinople*, 327, n. 29.

27 See, for example, K. Corrigan, *Visual Polemics in the Ninth-Century Byzantine Psalters* (Cambridge, 1992), 58, with reference to Byzantine sources. Also S. Gerstel, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries:*



Mary's pose and gesture resemble those of a Christian receiving Holy Communion, it seems unlikely that the white cloth in which she accepts the purple wool makes a eucharistic reference.

An alternative eucharistic reading is possible: in Byzantine culture Mary is often compared to the altar on which Christ's body is offered to the faithful.<sup>28</sup> Thus the white textile could be understood as an altar cloth receiving the eucharistic gifts with Christ's body symbolized by the purple wool. On the one hand, a similar white textile appears as an entirely functional object in household scenes in other Kokkinobaphos miniatures, so it is possible that here, too, it plays a practical role.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps it is a carefully chosen narrative and pictorial detail without Christological meaning, meant to enhance the visibility of the precious wool, visualize the reverence with which Mary receives it, and serve

as wrapping for transporting it to her home.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, in the miniature of Mary's journey to Elizabeth's house, the Virgin's lunch rests on a similar white textile on her lap (fig. 27). Hutter has convincingly argued that this scene has a eucharistic meaning, given the homily passage's references to human salvation through Mary's offspring, the paradisiacal character of the miniature landscape, and the figs on Mary's lap, which are often identified by Christian authors as the forbidden fruit.<sup>31</sup> In other words, the illustration suggests that the fruit of Mary's womb will allow humanity to return to the paradise lost through Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit. Even though this miniature appears in the sixth homily, in the inter pictorial context of the Kokkinobaphos miniatures, it could still suggest that the white cloth in which Mary receives the purple wool in the fourth homily makes a eucharistic reference, presenting her as the altar table of the salvific fruit, Christ's body. However, the visual features of the two miniatures should also be considered (compare figs. 17 and 27). While Mary's seated posture in the miniature to the sixth homily suggests a table prepared for a meal (fig. 27), this is not the impression given by her upright body in the miniature to the fourth homily (fig. 17). So perhaps here the miniaturist did not have in mind the eucharistic references found in the sixth homily and its illustration.

Of course a lack of intention on the part of the miniaturist does not mean that the Byzantine audience of the Kokkinobaphos codices did not apply culturally appropriate readings to conspicuous details of the images in the context of the homilies, themselves dense with theological references and symbols. Indeed

*Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary* (Seattle and London, 1999), 54–57. She mentions that by the eleventh century a change was introduced in Byzantine eucharistic practice: the laity would receive the bread mixed with wine (in the chalice) from a spoon, while the clergy would receive the body and blood of Christ separately, as had previously been the case for the laity as well. The representation of the communion of the apostles in Byzantine churches reflects the latter practice and usually depicts the apostles with uncovered hands. It should also be mentioned that in Byzantine iconography Mary usually holds Christ or objects that symbolize him (like the purple wool or a book) with bare hands: this reflects her incomparable status as his mother, the purest of all creation, who contained the uncontainable in her womb. For the same reason she was compared to the living tongs that held the divine coal, but were not burned by its fire (Isaiah 6:6). See, for example, Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie*, 69–70; Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος ἐν τῇ ὑμνογραφίᾳ*, 40–41 (λαβίς) (both n. 12 above). Some textual and visual examples are mentioned by Linardou, "Depicting the Salvation" (n. 1 above), 146–47, nn. 60 and 62. Isaiah's vision of the tongs and burning coal is also depicted in the two Kokkinobaphos manuscripts (discussed below); and Mary is described at least four times as the tongs of the divine coal in the text of the Kokkinobaphos homilies (2.6, 3.11, 5.11, 6.16, PG 127:567C, 612A, 641D–644A, 677C).

28 See, for example, Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος ἐν τῇ ὑμνογραφίᾳ*, 79 (τράπεζα).

29 A similar cloth appears beneath a water jug or a food container in the hands of a maid and lying on a corner of a banquet table in the house of Joachim and Anna in both Kokkinobaphos homiliaries (cf. fig. 6). A maid with a similar textile under a food container appears at Elizabeth's house in the Vatican codex (fig. 30). Vat. gr. 1162, folios 29r, 38v, 44v, 46v, 159r (Stornajolo, *Omēlie di Giacomo monaco* [n. 1 above], pls. 9, 14, 17, 18, 67); Paris. gr. 1208, folios 38v, 52v, 61r (Omont, *Miniatures des homélies* [n. 1 above], pls. IV, VII, VIII).

30 It should be noted that the cloth on the table holding the bundles of colored wool to be assigned to the other virgins is covered with a white textile similar to the one in Mary's hands (red and blue stripes close to the edge, identical white fringe, fig. 17). Such a visual connection might enhance the practical significance of this narrative detail in the context of the image: the priests provide Mary with both the wool and its protective wrapping. On the other hand, could the table in front of the priests indicate the possible eucharistic connotations of the scene, alluding to an altar table with the eucharistic gifts, as in the reading proposed by Constan? Even if that were the case, the white textile held by Mary does not correspond to Byzantine eucharistic practice, though it visually connects the material she holds to the altar-like table in front of the priests; in that sense, Byzantine viewers might have perceived eucharistic allusions in the scene. For more possibilities see below.

31 Hutter, "Die Homilien" (n. 1 above), 182–85.



Byzantine viewers, immersed in a culture in which subtle interrelated references within and across media were ubiquitous, might have read eucharistic allusions in the image on the basis of their own rich intertextual and intervisual experiences.<sup>32</sup> The sophisticated word-and-image interconnections in the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts, as discussed below, are a supreme example of what could be called the textintervisual characteristic of Byzantine culture.<sup>33</sup> In such a dynamic envi-

32 Since “intertextuality” was coined by Julia Kristeva to indicate how the meaning of a text (either intended by the author or constructed by the reader) is shaped through cross-references to other texts, the term has been extensively used and discussed and many related terms (like metatextuality or hypertextuality) have been introduced by scholars to specify with more subtlety the possible interactions among texts. The same concept applied to images or visual culture gave rise to the terms “interpictoriality” and “intervisuality” (for example, to denote cross-references between the miniatures of a codex or the murals of a church, or between pictorial representations in different monuments [interpictoriality]; or to indicate cross-references between different visual media, for example film and painting, or religious ritual and pictorial iconography [intervisuality]). The literature on the application and significance of these terms is extensive and constantly being augmented, and the various ramifications and subtleties of the operation of these “inter-functions” is well beyond the scope of this article. One concept I find particularly significant is that in the mind of the producers, participants, or consumers of culture, these cross-references operate both consciously and subconsciously, considerably amplifying the depth and complexities of cultural phenomena. And in the mind of scholars who study them, what is (or should be) of central importance is not simply the identification of the cross-references but investigating why they arise and how they create meaning. Some representative literature on intertextuality: J. Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York, 1980); G. Agger, “Intertextuality Revisited: Dialogues and Negotiations in Media Studies,” *Canadian Journal of Aesthetics* 4 (1999): [http://www.uqtr.quebec.ca/AE/vol\\_4/gunhild.htm](http://www.uqtr.quebec.ca/AE/vol_4/gunhild.htm) (accessed 31 Oct. 2014). On interpictoriality: C. Hahn, “Interpictoriality in the Limoges Chasses of Stephen, Martial, and Valerie,” in *Image and Belief: Studies in Celebration of the Eightieth Anniversary of the Index of Christian Art*, ed. C. Hourihane (Princeton, 1999), 109–24; W. Johnstone, “Interpictoriality: The Lives of Moses and Jesus in the Murals of the Sistine Chapel,” in *Sense and Sensitivity: Essays on Reading the Bible in Memory of Robert Carroll*, ed. A. G. Hunter and P. R. Davies (London, 2002), 416–55; M. A. Rose, *Pictorial Irony, Parody, and Pastiche: Comic Interpictoriality in the Arts of the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Bielefeld, 2011). On intervisuality (described as the intertextuality of the visual), see N. Mirzoeff, “Intervisuality,” in *Exploding Aesthetics*, ed. A. W. Balkema and H. Slager (Amsterdam, 2001), 124–33.

33 In tentatively introducing this term to denote a combined operation of intertextuality and intervisuality, in a web of references *within* and *across* media, I intend to emphasize the equal significance of both textual and visual interrelations in cultural experience, and

ronment, interpretations that a modern scholar might tentatively suggest could have been quite apparent to the original audience. It is part of the power of visual creations operating within a living tradition to accommodate messages that might not have been intended by the original producers, but were “activated” by viewers.

### Gideon's Fleece and the Kokkinobaphos Frontispieces

The scene of the delivery of the purple to the Virgin is followed by a full-page frontispiece to the fifth homily, on the annunciation, presenting the miracle of Gideon's fleece, narrated in Judges 6:36–40 (fig. 18):<sup>34</sup>

Gideon said to God, “If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised—look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said.” And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and wrung out the dew—a bowlful of water. Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece. This time make the fleece dry and the ground covered with dew.” That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.

This incident was interpreted by the church fathers as a type of the virginal conception, the fleece being the womb of the Theotokos upon which fell the morning

to highlight the broader implications of the “visual” versus the “pictorial” (so as to include all forms of visual expression and communication, such as ritual, dress codes, and other types of performative actions). I believe that the term “iconotext,” which is used in scholarship to denote word-and-image relationships, is lacking this kind of breadth. See the discussion by L. Louvel, *Poetics of the Iconotext* (Aldershot, 2011). For the rich word-and-image relationship in the pages of the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries, in which these two modes of expression and communication complement each other like the warp and weft of an intricate textile, see, for example, Linardou, “Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited” (n. 1 above).

34 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 110v (Stornajolo, *Omélies di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 46); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 149v (Omont, *Miniatures des homélies*, pl. XVIII). Discussed by Hutter, “Die Homilien,” 242–54, and Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 59–60 (all n. 1 above).



dew, a symbol of the descent of the Holy Spirit for the incarnation of the divine Logos.<sup>35</sup> As Hutter observes, Gideon's fleece often appeared among the Old Testament types of the Virgin in Byzantine literature, but it is not mentioned in Iakobos's homilies.<sup>36</sup> The miniature, however, complements the text in a most meaningful way. It is likely that the selection of this scene as a frontispiece at this place in the sequence of miniatures was carefully planned so that the reader would relate the purple wool for the temple veil (the theme of the previous miniature and symbol of Christ's body) with Gideon's woolen fleece (symbol of Mary's womb, where Christ would put on the veil of human nature). In turn, the fleece could be related to the following miniatures illustrating the homily on the annunciation, where Mary is repeatedly shown spinning the purple wool while being told that she is destined to weave the purple garment of flesh for the Logos Incarnate (cf. figs. 19–20, 22–23). These miniatures are followed by the full-page frontispiece to the sixth homily (fig. 24), which depicts the tabernacle of the Old Testament, in other words a precious veil that was considered a prefiguration of the Virgin as container of God, but also a symbol of Christ's body, received from his mother in order to veil his divinity and make it visible to human eyes.<sup>37</sup> The visual transition from Gideon's woolen fleece to the purple thread spun by the Virgin to the woven veil of the tabernacle specifically highlights the principal theme of the incarnation as the weaving of Christ's body in the Virgin's womb: the mother of the Lamb provides wool from her fleece, spins the thread, and weaves the veil that will dress her son.

35 See Hutter, "Die Homilien," 243–44, and Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 60. Also, Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie*, 78–79; Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος ἐν τῇ ὑμνογραφίᾳ*, 63 (πόκος) (both n. 12 above); A. Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image* (Princeton, 1986), 192, n. 107; Corrigan, *Visual Polemics* (n. 27 above), 76–77. The last two discuss Psalm 71, which was considered prophetic of the incarnation and the annunciation because it mentions the fleece and the dew, and was illustrated with these scenes in the Byzantine marginal Psalters. This psalm is also mentioned in the inscription that accompanies the two Kokkinobaphos frontispieces with Gideon ("Ὁ Γεδεών καὶ ὁ πόκος· διὸ καὶ ὁ Δαβὶδ λέγει· καταβήσεται ὡς νετὸς ἐπὶ πόκον." See also Hutter, *Die Homilien*, and Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*).

36 Hutter, "Die Homilien," 243.

37 See the comments by Conostas, "Icon Screen," (n. 5 above).

One objection to this reading might be that in Byzantine culture Gideon's fleece was commonly interpreted as a prefiguration of the annunciation,<sup>38</sup> and the tabernacle was one of the most common Old Testament types of the Virgin.<sup>39</sup> Thus there is no need to look for a special connection between the fifth and sixth frontispieces and the spinning of the purple thread in the miniatures of the annunciation. But this tradition does not mean that Gideon's fleece would have been the automatic choice for a typological frontispiece to an annunciation homily, nor would the tabernacle have been automatically selected to introduce the sixth homily. Indeed references to the Virgin-tabernacle are so frequent in the six Kokkinobaphos homilies that the tabernacle could easily have been used as the frontispiece to the second, third, fourth, or fifth homily.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, other Old Testament types of Mary that refer to her virginity or the incarnation—the burning bush, the holy mountain from which came a rock uncut by human hands, or the closed gate—were well known in Byzantine literature and could have been used instead of Gideon's fleece as the frontispiece to the fifth homily.<sup>41</sup> By the twelfth century, the burning bush was well established as a Marian type in the liturgy celebrating the annunciation,<sup>42</sup> and the holy mountain was well known as a Marian prefiguration in the visual arts.<sup>43</sup> Given that Gideon's fleece is not mentioned in

38 See n. 35 above.

39 See, for example, Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος ἐν τῇ ὑμνογραφίᾳ*, 71–72 (σκηνή); Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie*, 77–78.

40 See Homily 2.6, 2.11, 2.19, PG 127:576C, 584C, 596B. Homily 3.9, 3.10, PG 127:609A–B. Homily 4, Vat. gr. 1162, folios 88v, 98r–v, 101r–v, 105r–v. Homily 5.2, 5.22, PG 127:632C, 657A.

41 See Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie*, 68, 90–94, and Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος ἐν τῇ ὑμνογραφίᾳ*, 12 (βάτος), 53 (ὄρος), 67–68 (πύλη).

42 In the tenth-century Typikon of the Great Church, Exodus 3:1–8 (the episode of the burning bush) is the first reading at the liturgical celebration of the annunciation, preceding Psalm 71:6–7 (which refers to Gideon's fleece). *Le typicon de la Grande Église: ms. Sainte-Croix n° 40, X<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. and trans. J. Mateos, OCA 165–66, 2 vols. (Rome, 1962–63), 1:254.

43 The mountain producing the rock uncut by human hands was already visualized as a Marian type in the Byzantine marginal psalters of the ninth century (Chludov Psalter, fol. 64r) and the eleventh century (Bristol Psalter, fol. 105v, with reference to Mary in the inscription and not the illustration; Theodore Psalter, fol. 84r; and Barberini Psalter, fol. 110v). See Corrigan, *Visual Polemics* (n. 27 above), 37–40, figs. 50, 52; S. Der Nersessian, *L'illustration des psautiers grecs du Moyen âge, Londres, Add. 19.352*, Bibliothèque des Cahiers archéologiques 5 (Paris, 1970), 38, pl. 46; J. C. Anderson,



any of the six Kokkinobaphos homilies, it is fair to ask whether there are reasons other than its traditional exegetical association with the annunciation that it was used as the frontispiece. I believe Gideon's fleece was chosen because of its connection to the symbolism of the purple wool spun by the Virgin. A brief overview of the selection process for the other Kokkinobaphos frontispieces may further support this suggestion.

All the frontispieces in the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries seem to have been selected according to a carefully thought-out plan. The frontispiece to the first homily (on Mary's conception in Anna's womb, fig. 2) depicts the ascension of Christ.<sup>44</sup> According to Hutter, this image acts as the frontispiece to all the homilies, which praise the Virgin as the instrument through which God came to earth in order to raise human nature back to heaven. This is exactly what happens at the ascension, when Christ returns to heaven as both perfect God and perfect man, and his mother looks toward him and prays for the salvation of all humankind.<sup>45</sup>

The frontispiece to the second homily, on Mary's birth (fig. 5), represents Christ ready to descend to the world through Jacob's ladder, a well-known Old Testament type of the Theotokos.<sup>46</sup> As Hutter has observed, the birth of Mary is the first step toward the birth of Christ, and his descent to earth prepares the

way for the ascent to heaven seen in the previous frontispiece. Above the image of the ladder, Jacob is seen taking off his boots to cross the River Jordan, which demarcates the promised land, the earthly antetype of the paradise lost to humanity by Adam and Eve. Through the new Eve/Mary, the new Adam/Christ will open to humanity a new, heavenly paradise. So in Christian thinking, every step that leads the biblical chosen people closer to the Old Testament promised land symbolizes the progression of the incarnation that will lead the real chosen people, the Christians, back to the heavenly Eden.<sup>47</sup>

For this reason, the third homily, on Mary's entrance to the temple, is preceded by an image of Moses and the burning bush, a critical step in the return of the Jews to the promised land (fig. 14).<sup>48</sup> Here, the following analogy seems to be intended: while in the homily Mary is hailed as the instrument of the forthcoming salvation and liberation of humankind from the bondage of sin, and is accepted on the holy ground of the temple as the holiest container of all, in the frontispiece, Moses learns on the holy ground of the burning bush (which prefigures the incarnation through Mary) about the forthcoming liberation of the Jews from their Egyptian slavery, and their journey to the promised land.<sup>49</sup>

The frontispiece to the fourth homily, on Mary's betrothal to Joseph, takes us one step further (fig. 15): it makes reference to the greatest Jewish king, Solomon, who ruled the promised land, built the temple, and was also an antetype of Christ. In the illustration, Jesus is shown lying on Solomon's couch, guarded by the sixty valiant ones mentioned in the Song of Songs (3:7–8).<sup>50</sup>

P. Canart, and C. Walter, *The Barberini Psalter, Codex Vaticanus Barberinianus Graecus 372* (Zurich and New York, 1989), 96. For an overview of biblical types of Mary in Byzantine art see D. Mouriki, "Αἱ βιβλικαὶ προεικονίσεις τῆς Παναγίας εἰς τὸν τρούλλον τῆς Περιβλέπτου τοῦ Μυστρά," *Ἀρχ. Δελτ.* (1970): 1:217–54, pls. 72–93; Underwood, *Kariye Djami* (n. 9 above), 1:223–37; T. Papamastorakis, "Ἡ ἐνταξὴ τῶν προεικονίσεων τῆς Θεοτόκου καὶ τῆς Ὑψώσεως τοῦ Σταυροῦ σὲ ἓνα ἰδιότυπο εἰκονογραφικὸ κύκλο στὸν Ἅγιο Γεώργιο Βιάννου Κρήτης," *Δελτ. Χριστ. Ἀρχ. Ἐτ.* 14 (1987–88): 315–23. See also Linardou, "Depicting the Salvation" (n. 1 above), for a discussion of Jacob's ladder, the burning bush, the couch of Solomon, and Isaiah's vision of the burning coal in the Kokkinobaphos miniatures.

44 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 2v (Stornajolo, *Omélie di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 1); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 3v, *Miniatures des homélies*, pl. I. Discussed in Hutter, "Die Homilien," 24–45; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 19–21 (all n. 1 above).

45 Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 19–21.

46 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 22v (Stornajolo, *Omélie di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 7); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 29v (Omout, *Miniatures des homélies*, pl. IV). Discussed in Hutter, "Die Homilien," 223–29; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 26–27. For examples of Mary as the ladder in Byzantine literature see Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie*, 66–67, and Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος ἐν τῇ ὑμνογραφίᾳ*, 36 (κλίμαξ) (both n. 12 above).

47 The connection between the promised land (demarcated by Jordan) and paradise (demarcated by four rivers rather than one, as seen also in two miniatures of the second Kokkinobaphos homily) is made by Hutter, "Die Homilien," 226–29 and Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 27. For further discussion of this frontispiece, which has been unjustly misunderstood as an unsuccessful composition, see below, 304–9.

48 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 54v (Stornajolo, *Omélie di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 21); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 73v (Omout, *Homélies du moine Jacques*, pl. X). Discussed in Hutter, "Die Homilien," 229–33; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 40–41.

49 In Hutter, "Die Homilien," 228, and Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 40, Moses taking off his shoes in front of the burning bush is compared to Jacob taking off his shoes on the banks of the Jordan.

50 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 82v (Stornajolo, *Omélie di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 32); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 109v (Omout, *Homélies du moine Jacques*,



According to Christian exegesis, this couch is Mary's body, the nuptial bed on which Christ's human and divine natures would be united through the descent of the Holy Ghost, without the intervention of a man.<sup>51</sup> In the Kokkinobaphos frontispiece this nuptial bed, a symbol of Mary's virginity, is shown bearing Christ, and therefore proclaims that the Theotokos is exclusively his bride.<sup>52</sup> The underlying message might be that

pl. XIV). Hutter, "Die Homilien," 233–41; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 48–50.

51 See Linardou, "Couch of Solomon" (n. 1 above), 73–85, esp. 76–77, n. 17, with reference to Marian homilies by Andrew of Crete and Tarasios of Constantinople. I thank Linardou for giving me a copy of her article even before it was published. It is the latest and most comprehensive study on the Couch of Solomon frontispiece and contains all the previous bibliography on the subject. Linardou connects this frontispiece and the accompanying exegetical text in the two Kokkinobaphos homilies to Eirene's interest in the Song of Songs and its Christian interpretation. Linardou does not investigate why the Marian type of the couch was chosen specifically for Iakobos's fourth homily (dedicated to Mary's betrothal). However, in a later publication ("Depicting the Salvation" [n. 1 above], 143) she draws a connection between the frontispiece and the theme of the related homily: "Mary's betrothal to Joseph in the sermon is juxtaposed with her mystical nuptial union with her Son and Bridegroom."

52 Although the bride is not interpreted as a type of the Virgin in Byzantine exegetical literature on the Song of Songs before the fourteenth century (Linardou, "Couch of Solomon," 77), such an interpretation is present much earlier in Byzantine Marian literature. For example, in the fifth century Proklos of Constantinople says in his *Oratio 6, De laudibus S. Mariae*, 17, PG 65:756B: "Αὐτὴ ἡ καλὴ τῶν Ἀσμάτων νύμφη, ἡ τὸν παλαιὸν χιτῶνα ἀποδυσμένη, καὶ τοὺς νομίμους πόδας ἀποπλυνάμενη, καὶ μετὰ αἰδοῦς τὸν ἄφθαρτον νυμφῶνα ἐν τῷ αὐτῆς ταμιεῖῳ ὑποδεχομένη." Moreover, since Christ is the groom (νυμφός) and Mary is generally called the bride (νύμφη) in Byzantine literature, she can be understood as his bride; but she is also the bride of God the Father, since she gave birth to his Son. Both meanings can be implicit in phrases in which Mary is addressed as "Θεόννυμφε" "Νύμφη Θεοῦ ἀνύμφευτε" "θεονύμφευτε" "νύμφη ἄμωμος" and the like (as, for example, in Joseph the Hymnographer's *Mariale*, PG 105:1165D, 1185B, 1192A, 1276D, 1289B, 1305D, 1308A, 1313C, 1389C, 1393B, 1409B). In other cases Mary is specifically mentioned as bride of either the Son or the Father (for examples see Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος ἐν τῇ ὑμνογραφίᾳ* [n. 12 above], 49–50). In the twelfth century, Neophytos of Paphos frequently refers to the Theotokos both as Christ's bride and as the Father's bride. See E. M. Toniolo, "Omeli e catechesi mariane inedite di Neofito il Recluso (1134–1210 c.)," *Marianum, ephemerides mariologiae* 36 (1974): 184–315, esp. 218, 234 (Homily on Mary's entrance in the Temple, 5.142–54, 14.420–22), 262 (Homily on the Annunciation, 18.405), 264, 270 (Homily on Mary's Dormition, 1.21–22, 4.123–25), 296 (Homily on Mary's Nativity, 1.21–22), 330 (Catechesis on Mary's Entrance in the Temple, 1.20–22), 292, 294 (Catechesis on Mary's Dormition, 1.6–7, 3.54).

her betrothal to Joseph (the subject of the homily) was a means of safeguarding the purity of God's virginal mother and bride.

The subject matter and iconographic details of the first four frontispieces of the Kokkinobaphos homilies were clearly chosen to emphasize the progression of the incarnation and of human salvation through Mary as Theotokos. And since all four specifically relate to the central message of the accompanying homilies (or all the homilies, in the case of the first frontispiece), it is likely that the last two frontispieces do as well. Just as Gideon's fleece is thematically connected to the annunciation in the fifth homily (fig. 18), there must be a connection between the sixth homily and the image of the tabernacle that serves as its frontispiece (fig. 24). The selection of the fifth and sixth frontispieces could be explained by the fact that they focus on the theme of the fleece-wool and the tabernacle-veil, making them especially meaningful in the series of miniatures that starts with the delivery of the purple wool to Mary and ends with the delivery of the purple yarn back to the temple, and along the way includes images of threads and other veils as symbols of the incarnation (figs. 17–25). Likewise there are visual and conceptual interrelations among the first four frontispieces and miniatures appearing before or after them.<sup>53</sup>

It is worth noting that the frontispieces to the second, third, and fourth homilies present Old Testament types of the Virgin on which Christ's image is depicted even though Mary does not yet bear him in her womb in the stages of her life discussed in the corresponding homilies. But for the twelfth-century producers and users of the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts, the incarnation had been eternally preordained through the wisdom of divine providence, had been prefigured and prepared in the Old Testament, had been historically accomplished through the birth of Christ, and was perpetually experienced in the daily lives of Christians through faith and religious practice. Thus it would have made perfect sense to them that Christ

53 For example, see the relation between Jordan and the rivers of paradise (figs. 5 and 7), or Jacob and Moses taking off their shoes on holy ground (figs. 5, 14), as suggested by Hutter (nn. 47 and 49 above), or the appearance of the sixty valiant ones around the couch of Solomon and around Mary as she walks toward the temple and when she is protected from demons in the temple (figs. 15–16; Linardou, "Couch of Solomon," 77–81, figs. 1–3, with reference to previous literature).



appears on Jacob's ladder, in the burning bush, and on Solomon's couch even before the homilies deal with the annunciation. It is significant that the Old Testament protagonists of the frontispieces do not see Christ's image: Jacob turns his back to the apparition of Christ at the top of the ladder,<sup>54</sup> Moses faces away from Christ-Emmanuel in the burning bush, and Solomon is not even depicted in the fourth frontispiece. These iconographic choices reflect a theme explicit in the homilies: the Old Testament prophets were eager to experience the incarnation and hoped it would happen during their lives, but they predated the age of grace.<sup>55</sup> It was the exclusive privilege of Christians, like the producers and users of the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries, to experience the truth of the incarnation through the holy texts, images, and rituals of their faith, after the Virgin had become Theotokos (God-bearer) and Meter Theou (Mother of God) and Christ had taught and ministered to humanity in person. This paramount privilege, defining of Christian identity, was presented to the eyes of the Byzantine readers of the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries, who looked upon the image of Christ, while the Old Testament protagonists remained unaware of him.

It is also worth noting that when the Virgin is finally pregnant with the Logos Incarnate in the narrative of the fifth and sixth homilies, the frontispieces present Marian types that do not include Christ's image. As the truth of the incarnation is described as a historical reality in the unfolding of the textual narrative, the miniatures elaborate further. They do not simply visualize the reality of the incarnation through images of Christ, but instead emphasize its materiality and present its fabric: the wool and veil, Gideon's fleece, and Moses's tabernacle are used as symbols of the investiture of the Logos in the mantle of human flesh prepared by his mother. This theme of textile production makes significant references to female agency that would have been important to the sebastokratorissa, as I will discuss later on. For the moment I will examine additional visual and textual evidence from the manuscripts that corroborates the Christological interpretation of sacred fabrics.

54 In the Vatican copy. In the Paris Kokkinobaphos Jacob's body is turned toward Christ, but the patriarch is not looking at his divine descendant on top of the ladder.

55 Homily 2.2, PG 127:568C–569B.

## Gideon's Fleece: A Link between Adam and Mary

A meaningful interrelation exists between Gideon's fleece (fig. 18) and Adam's and Eve's lamentation after their expulsion from paradise in the illustration of the second homily (fig. 10).<sup>56</sup> In the latter scene, Adam and Abel are dressed in sheepskins of the same color and texture as Gideon's fleece, while Eve and Cain, the negative figures in the first family, are distinguished by sheepskins of a greenish rather than bluish color. This is the only instance in the two manuscripts in which Adam and Eve are dressed in sheepskins rather than in robes, or the leaves used to cover their nakedness immediately after the Fall (figs. 7, 8, and 10).<sup>57</sup> The sheepskins seem to have been used to emphasize the progenitors' disgrace after their expulsion from paradise: animal furs are not as refined as woven textiles, so they visualize an intermediary stage in the uneasy transition from paradisiacal bliss to the trappings of civilization. In addition, animal skins are products of sacrifice and death, a condition that affected humans after the fall, and led to the incarnation of the Logos so that through his death and sacrifice as the Lamb of God humanity could reenter paradise. These concepts are relevant to the story of Cain and Abel illustrated in the same Kokkinobaphos miniature (fig. 10). Abel's sacrifice of

56 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 36v (Stornajolo, *Omelie di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 12); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 49v (Omout, *Homélies du moine Jacques*, pl. VI). Hutter, "Die Homilien," 277–86; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 31–32 (all n. 1 above).

57 In the miniature of their expulsion from paradise (figs. 7–8), the first parents initially appear naked (when being tricked by the snake), and then dressed in leaves. See Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 35r (Stornajolo, *Omelie di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 11); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 47r (Omout, *Homélies du moine Jacques*, pl. V). Hutter, "Die Homilien," 276–77; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 30–31. After the fall, in the miniature discussed here (fig. 10), Adam and Eve first appear covered in leaves (upper part of the composition) and then dressed in sheepskins (central part of the composition). They appear dressed in robes in the following scenes: Adam and Eve lamenting in Hades; Adam and Eve rejoicing in Hades as Mary walks toward the temple; Adam and Eve following Christ out of Hades and entering paradise, where they venerate Mary. See Vat. gr. 1162, folios 30v, 62v, 48v (Stornajolo, *Omelie di Giacomo Monaco*, pls. 10, 25, 19); Paris. gr. 1208, folios 41r, 80r, 66v (Omout, *Homélies du moine Jacques*, pls. V, XI, IX). For the attire of Adam and Eve in the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries and in Byzantine art generally (where the first parents appear dressed either in sheepskins or woven clothes in scenes following their fall), see also Hutter, "Die Homilien," 285–86.



a lamb is favorably received by God (top right), which causes the jealous Cain to kill his brother (bottom right). The alignment of the two episodes suggests that the death of Abel, the first in human history, prefigures the ultimate sacrifice of Christ the Lamb as ransom for human salvation.<sup>58</sup>

The similarity between Adam's clothes of shame, Abel's lambskin of innocence, and Gideon's fleece of grace also might have been intended to underline the connection between Adam's sin and its abolition through the advent and sacrifice of Christ, the new Adam.<sup>59</sup> Such an interpretation is corroborated by the extensive use of clothing metaphors, both in the Kokkinobaphos homilies and Byzantine literature generally, to describe the disgrace caused by the fall and the grace bestowed on human nature through the incarna-

tion and sacrifice of the Son of God. According to a long literary tradition—with its roots in the Bible and the exegesis of the early church fathers—those clothing metaphors refer to the old Adam as the one who lost his robe of glory at the fall, and to the new Adam (Christ) as the one who wore the body of the first Adam in order to restore the robe of glory to mankind.<sup>60</sup> The description of Mary as the one who clothed Christ in the purple of the flesh originates from this literary tradition.<sup>61</sup> In the clothing metaphors referring to her role in the incarnation, the relationship between the old and new Adam is often brought into focus. When she clothed the Logos in a human body, the nudity of Adam and Eve was amended: the skins they wore after the fall were replaced by the robe of glory God had initially bestowed upon human nature.<sup>62</sup>

58 For the eucharistic significance of Abel's sacrifice to God (and therefore its connection to Christ's own sacrifice on the cross) see n. 114 below. In the Paris Kokkinobaphos the murder of Abel has a sacrificial overtone: Cain does not kill him with the usual stone or a club, but with a knife, an exceptional occurrence in the surviving Byzantine imagery. Anderson suggests that this detail illustrates Adam's laments about Eve's submitting to temptation with the exclamation: "How could you fail to recognize the sharpened knife drawn against us?" Anderson also observes that Cain's and Abel's postures, the one standing, the other kneeling with hands bound behind his back and head tilted backwards as the knife touches his throat, resemble the iconography of animal sacrifice and the near sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham ("Illustrated Sermons" [n. 2 above], 79–81). I believe that in these two sacrificial parallels, which both allude to Christ's own sacrifice, we might identify a profound theological message: Abel was the first innocent victim in human history and the first casualty of death; Christ was the ultimate innocent victim, submitting to death in order to defeat it and eliminate what Abel experienced in the beginning of time (in other words, Christ is both the new Adam and the new Abel). The chromatic similarity between Gideon's fleece (as a reference to Christ) and Abel's lambskin underlines this connection between the Old and the New Testament sacrifices that encompass the history of human salvation. Since Linardou has proven that the Paris Kokkinobaphos was produced after the Vatican manuscript and was probably destined for Iakobos (see below, 291–92), it is possible that the novel iconography of Abel's murder was invented by the author of the homilies to enhance the theological implications of the miniature.

59 In the context of this interpretation, the choice of color for the lambskin might be particularly significant: the use of blue in the case of Adam, Abel, and Gideon to refer to the new Adam could also allude to Christ's identity as king of heaven. On the contrary, the green used for Eve and Cain might suggest a connection with the earth, the realm of human punishment after the fall. Compare the green color of the earthly landscape in the Lamentation composition, especially around the three lower episodes that illustrate the first crime and death in human history (fig. 10).

60 See S. Brock, "Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition," in *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter*, ed. M. Schmidt (Regensburg, 1982), 11–40, repr. in idem, *Studies in Syriac Christianity: History, Literature, and Theology* (Aldershot, 1992), art. XI; idem, "The Robe of Glory: A Biblical Image in the Syriac Tradition," *The Way* 39 (1999): 247–59. Also, M. Aubineau, "La tunique sans couture du Christ: Exégèse patristique de Jean 19, 23–24," in *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, ed. P. Granfield and J. A. Jungmann, 2 vols. (Münster, 1970), 1:111–16; Conostas, "Weaving the Body of God," 180–81; idem, *Proclus of Constantinople*, 318, with extensive references to previous literature (both n. 5 above). See also E. Haulotte, *Symbolique du vêtement selon la Bible* (Paris, 1966), and, more recently, A. Cras, *La symbolique du vêtement dans la Bible: Pour une théologie du vêtement* (Paris, 2011).

61 For an anthology of Byzantine texts in which Mary is described as the one who clothed Christ in the veil of human nature (frequently with specific reference to the purple garment of flesh), see Evangelatou, "Purple Thread of the Flesh" (n. 5 above), 265–66, nn. 33–35.

62 In the following examples, the investment of Christ in the robe of human nature, and Mary's role in the incarnation, are described as the remedy for Adam's or humanity's nudity or for their being clothed in robes of disgrace: *Akathistos Hymn*, oikos 13, line 16, PG 92:1341D (for a more recent edition with English translation and commentary see L. M. Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn* [Leiden and Boston, 2001], 12–13); John Chrysostom, *In incarnationem domini* (spurious), PG 59:695; Proklos of Constantinople, *Oratio 4, In natalem diem domini*, PG 65:712D–713A; Germanos of Constantinople, *In S. Mariae zonam*, PG 98:373C, *In praesentationem SS. Deiparae*, PG 98:304D; Cosmas the Hymnographer, *Hymni*, PG 98:493B; George of Nikomedeia, *In SS. Mariae praesentationem*, PG 100:1416BC, 1417B; Photios of Constantinople, *On the Annunciation* (157), *On the Annunciation* (257), ed. B. Laourdas, *Ὁμιλῆαι* (Athens, 1959), 61:10–11, 81:33–82:3, English translation by C. Mango, *The Homilies of Photius, Patriarch*



In this literary tradition, wool is often specifically mentioned in the symbolic imagery describing the clothing of the Logos in the garment of human nature. For example, in his *Canons*, Andrew of Crete refers to the Theotokos as the one who produced or dyed in purple “the wool of the incarnation.”<sup>63</sup> According to John of Damascus, she is “the wool of virginity” from which the robe of the incarnation was produced.<sup>64</sup> Joseph the hymnographer refers to Anna as the shell producing the purple dye (Mary), by which “the wool of the incarnation of the King was colored.”<sup>65</sup>

In Byzantine tradition, the most elaborate wool/fleece/sheepskin metaphors on the incarnation are found in the fifth-century homilies of Proklos of Constantinople, which have been insightfully studied by Nicholas Conostas.<sup>66</sup> These orations are particularly prolific in the typological interpretation of Old Testament passages as references to Mary, and remained popular and influential in later centuries.<sup>67</sup> In his first homily dedicated to the Virgin, Proklos defines the Theotokos as the fleece of the heavenly dew (an obvious reference to Gideon’s fleece). In her body, the robe worn by Christ to unite divine and human nature was woven from the wool of “Adam’s ancient sheepskin.”<sup>68</sup> In other words,

Mary’s flesh is identified with both Gideon’s miraculous fleece and with Adam’s sheepskin (an obvious symbol of human nature), because the Theotokos was both miraculously pure and human. Without this connection between fleece and sheepskin (the Virgin’s pure nature and human nature), the incarnation of the Logos and the salvation of humanity would not have been possible. Christ, the lamb born from the fleece/Mary, sacrificed himself so that Adam’s sheepskins of disgrace—the garments he wore to cover his sinful human nature—would be replaced by his original robes of glory. In the miniatures of the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries, the similarities between Gideon’s fleece and Adam’s sheepskins are a perfect illustration of Proklos’s metaphor.

The homilies by Iakobos of Kokkinobaphos are prolific in their clothing metaphors. Adam’s lamentations over his fall in the second homily, for example, visualized in the miniature that presents him and Eve dressed in sheepskins (fig. 10), contain many such references: because of his sin, he who was once decorated with glory is left naked and stripped of grace;<sup>69</sup> he who was dressed with royal power is now robed in skin; he who was honored in the beauty of his creator’s image as if in purple, is now covered in the shame of

of Constantinople (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), 121, 148; Joseph the Hymnographer, *Mariale* (n. 52 above), 1045C, 1100D–1101A, 1144C, 1220A.

63 The Virgin is “ἡ πορφύρις ἡ τὸ ἔριον βάψασα τῆς ἀπορρήτου τοῦ Λόγου σαρκώσεως,” *Canon in B. Annae Conceptionem*, PG 97:1316B. In *Canon in B. Mariae Nativitatem*, PG 97:1320A, Andrew addresses the Virgin as “τὴν ἀσπίλον ἀμνάδα, τὴν τὸ ἔριον Χριστῷ μόνῃ ἐκ κοιλίας σου προσαγαγούσαν τὴν ἡμῶν οὐσίαν.”

64 “Χαῖρε, ὑάκινθε τὸ φλογοφάνες τῆς παρθενίας ἔριον ἐξ οὐ μυστικῶς τῷ Θεῷ ἱερούργηται ἀμφιον σωματώσεως.” *Homilia II in Nativitatem B. V. Mariae*, PG 96:693D. In this passage John of Damascus identifies the Virgin with “πορφύρα” “βύσσος” and “ὑάκινθος,” which are three of the four words used in Exodus to describe the material of the tabernacle (26.1, 3).

65 “Ὁ κόχλος Ἀννα προήγαγε πορφύρα, τὴν τὸ ἔριον βάψασα τῆς σωματώσεως τοῦ Βασιλέως. . .” *Mariale* (n. 52 above), 988A.

66 Conostas, *Proclus of Constantinople* (n. 5 above).

67 See, for example, the reference to the loom of Mary’s body that produced the mantle worn by Christ to mend the spoiled garment of Adam’s glory, *Homilia in natalem diem domini*, 2, PG 65:712C. Critical edition and translation of the homily by Conostas, *Proclus of Constantinople*, 226–37. The relevant passage appears at 230.55 ff.

68 *Oratio 1, De laudibus S. Mariae*, 1, PG 65:681B. As Conostas has observed (*Proclus of Constantinople*, 134–35, 318–19), this passage contains one of the most elaborate weaving metaphors referring to the incarnation in Byzantine literature. Mary is addressed as “ὁ

τοῦ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ὑετοῦ καθαρώτατος πόκος, ἐξ οὗ ὁ ποιμὴν τὸ πρόβατον ἐνεδύσατο. . . ὁ φρικτὸς τῆς οἰκονομίας ἱστὸς, ἐν ᾧ ἀρρήτως ὑφάνθη ὁ τῆς ἐνώσεως χιτὼν· οὐπὲρ ἱστουργὸς μὲν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον· ἔριθος δὲ, ἡ ἐξ ὕψους ἐπισκιάσασα δύναμις· ἔριον δὲ, τὸ ἀρχαῖον τοῦ Ἀδάμ κώδιον· κρόκη δὲ, ἡ ἐκ Παρθένου ἀμόλυντος σὰρξ· κερκὶς δὲ, ἡ ἀμέτρητος τοῦ φορέσαντος χάρις· τεχνίτης δὲ, ὁ δι’ ἀκοῆς εἰσπηδήσας Λόγος.” According to this text, Mary is “the purest fleece of the heavenly dew, from which the shepherd clothed himself with the sheep . . . the awesome loom of the divine economy on which the robe of union was ineffably woven. The loom-worker was the Holy Spirit; the wool-worker the ‘overshadowing power from on high’ (Luke 1:35). The wool was the ancient sheepskin of Adam; the weft was the spotless flesh of the Virgin. The weaver’s shuttle was propelled by the immeasurable grace of him who wore the robe; the artisan was the Word who entered in through the sense of hearing.” This translation is based on *ibid.*, 136:20–31, 319, with minor differences. Most importantly, I translate κώδιον as sheepskin rather than fleece, to differentiate it from the word πόκος, which in the Greek text appears in conjunction with the dew descending upon Mary (and not with Adam), and alludes to Gideon’s fleece.

69 Homily 2.8, PG 127:580A, where Adam laments that “τό τε γυμνωθῆναι τῆς χάριτος, καὶ τῆς ἀφάτου τιμῆς ἀποραγῆναι, καὶ εἰς τὸ τῆς θνητότητος καταπεσεῖν ἐπιτίμιον, ἐπώδυνον αὐτῷ τὸν αἰῶνα διειτθεῖ.” Homily 2.9, PG 127:581B, where Adam says of himself, “ὁ τῇ δόξῃ ἐστολισμένος, γυμνὸς· ἄτιμος, ὁ τε τιμημένος· ἐξόριστος ὁ βασιλεύς. . .”

his disobedience.<sup>70</sup> In the latter passage, the reference to the purple/royal robe of glory lost by Adam further emphasizes the function of the purple wool spun by the Virgin as a symbol of the incarnation: she is preparing the new purple robe of humanity, worn by the second Adam to restore the first Adam to his original glory. Additional clothing metaphors referring to the incarnation, to human salvation, or to the state of the human soul (as a pure or impure mantle) are found throughout the homilies.<sup>71</sup> In addition, at least three times Iakobos calls the Virgin *ἄμνᾱς* (ewe, female sheep), since she is the mother of the Lamb (*ἄμνός*, male sheep).<sup>72</sup> It is also explicitly said that as an *ἄμνᾱς* she produced the wool of human nature in which Christ was dressed.<sup>73</sup> She is also called the sheep of golden wool, from which the Creator put on the robe of human nature in order to cover the nakedness of humankind and its disgrace, tearing the robes of skin worn since the time of Adam and Eve and clothing the human race in its original dignity and beauty.<sup>74</sup>

These references to the Theotokos as the sheep that produced the “wool of the incarnation” are analogous to her typological identification with Gideon’s fleece. The textual references to this “wool of the incarnation” as both the one with which Christ’s human body was woven and through which Adam’s original robe of glory was restored seem to be reflected in the Kokkinobaphos miniatures: the similarities between Gideon’s fleece and the sheepskin worn by Adam in the scene of his lamentations after the fall vividly convey

the idea that the robe put on by Christ in the Virgin’s womb will replace Adam’s garments of shame.

In Byzantine theology and in the textintervisual realm of the Kokkinobaphos homilies, Gideon’s fleece and the purple wool spun by the Virgin are of the same physical substance,<sup>75</sup> and symbolically refer to the same sacred substance, the virginal flesh from which the true temple veil, Christ’s body, will be woven. Consequently, in the sequence of miniatures that starts with the delivery of the purple to the Virgin and continues with its spinning during the annunciation (figs. 17–23), Gideon’s fleece could be perceived as the source of the purple wool prepared by Mary for the temple veil.

### The Tabernacle Veil

The tabernacle (fig. 24),<sup>76</sup> another type-fabric of the incarnation and forerunner of the temple veil, appears after the spinning of the purple thread and seems to complete the sequence that begins with the fleece of Gideon. The objects represented in the holy tent and mentioned in the frontispiece’s inscription seem specifically selected to emphasize the connection between the tabernacle and the purple thread: the ark, the cherubim, the jar of manna, the tablets of the law, and the flowering rod of Aaron were kept behind the veil that separated the holy of holies from the rest of the sacred ground in the tabernacle.<sup>77</sup> This veil was of the same

70 Homily 2.9, PG 127:581A, where Adam says of himself, “ὁ τὴν βασιλῆιον περιβαλλόμενος ἐξουσίαν, τοὺς δερματίνους περιβέβλημαι χιτῶνας. Ὁ καθάπερ πορφυρίδι τῇ τοῦ κατ’ εἰκόνα σεμνυνόμενος ὠραιότητι, τῇ αἰσχύνῃ καλύπτομαι τῆς παρακοῆς. . . .”

71 See Homilies 2.4, PG 127:573A; 2.13–14, PG 127:588A; 3.2, PG 127:600C–601A; 6.19, PG 127:681A.

72 Homily 3.10, 17, 25, PG 127:609B, 617D, 625D. See also the following two notes.

73 Homily 2.7, PG 127:577D. (The prophets and the just ask the Logos to bring forth Mary’s birth, through whom he will be incarnate to save them from death: “Παράγαγε τὴν ἄσπιλον ἄμνᾱδα, ἐξ ἧς τὸ τῆς φύσεως περιβαλλόμενος ἔριον, ὠραιότατος ἡμῖν ὁφθήσῃ τοῖς ἐν τῷ σκότει.”)

74 Homily 2.18, PG 127:593CD. “Ὡ χρυσοῖριε ἄμνᾱς, ἐξ ἧς ὁ Κτίστης τὸ τῆς φύσεως ἐνδυσάμενος περιβόλαιον, τὴν ἐμὴν περιέστειλε γύμνωσιν· τὸ τῆς αἰσχύνῃς περιεκάλυψεν αἰσχος· τοὺς δερματίνους διέρρηξε χιτῶνας· τὴν πρῶην ἡμφίαν σεν εὐπρέπειαν· τὴν ὠραιότητα τοῦ ἀρχετύπου περιέθηκε κάλλους.”

75 Indeed, in his homilies, Iakobos describes the material entrusted to the Virgin for spinning as wool (“ἡ τε γὰρ πορφύρα καὶ τὸ ἐκ κόκκου βαμμένον ἔριον. . . .” Homily 4, Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 109r), and calls her “woolworker” (“ἐριθον,” Homily 6.9, PG 127:669B). Likewise, in the fourteenth-century mosaic of the Chora Monastery in Istanbul, when Mary receives the purple from the temple priests the inscription clearly states that all the fibers distributed to the virgins for the temple veil were of wool (“ἐρία,” see n. 18 above). See also E. Wayland-Barber, *Women’s Work: The First 20,000 Years; Women, Cloth, and Society in Early Times* (New York and London, 1994), 103, 132, 254, where for technical reasons related to the dying of threads, it is suggested that the purple, scarlet, and blue parts of the tabernacle veil (forerunner of the temple veil) were indeed woolen.

76 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 133v (Stornajolo, *Omélie di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 58); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 181v (Omont, *Homélies du moine Jacques*, pl. XXIII). Hutter, “Die Homilien,” 254–65; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 69 (all n. 1 above).

77 See Exodus 25:16 (Moses must put in the ark the testimonies of God’s alliance, which include the jar of manna [Exodus 16:33–34], the tablets of the law [Deuteronomy 10:5], and Aaron’s flowering rod [Numbers 17:16]). According to Exodus 26:33–34 and 38:1–8, the ark is placed behind the veil of the holy of holies and is accompanied by



four colors that were used for the entire tabernacle tent;<sup>78</sup> and it was the exact forerunner of the veil concealing the holy of holies in the Jewish temple, for which the Virgin was spinning the purple.<sup>79</sup> The cross at the top of the tabernacle, above the opening revealing the holy of holies, further relates this precious fabric to the veil of the Jewish temple: this cross alludes to the temple veil torn at the time of the crucifixion,<sup>80</sup> when God was revealed to the world through the human body of Christ, the true temple veil that gives access to the true holy of holies, heaven.<sup>81</sup> This reference to divine revelation through the tearing of Christ's veil of humanity is emphasized in the Kokkinobaphos frontispiece by the fact that the tabernacle veil is divided to reveal the contents of the holy of holies, while in Jewish practice this veil, both in the tabernacle and the temple, would be lifted only once a year, exclusively for the high priest.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, the Jews represented in the foreground do not see the sacred objects revealed by the parted tabernacle. Only the Christian readers of the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries see them, just as only they can see the image

of Christ on the heavenly ladder and in the burning bush in the second and third frontispieces (figs. 5, 14).

Two more images of symbolic veils appear in this visual transition from fleece to tabernacle, further enriching the visual references to the incarnation as the clothing of Christ in the purple of the flesh: the heavenly veil lifted to reveal the divine (fig. 21) and the mantle of the future investiture of Christ as Pantokrator after his ascension (fig. 23). In the following paragraphs I discuss some examples of the rich textile symbolism of these images.

## The Veil of Heaven

The miniature following Gabriel's first salutation to Mary depicts Isaiah's vision of God and his purification through the burning coal (Isaiah 6:1–6). The Creator is represented as the Ancient of Days, or the Pre-eternal Logos (cf. Daniel 7:9–14), revealed behind the veil of heaven (fig. 21).<sup>83</sup> As Hutter has observed, this miniature elaborates on biblical references and Iakobos's homily on the annunciation by presenting the moment of the incarnation as the revelation of God through the human nature bestowed on him by the Theotokos.<sup>84</sup> According to the Mariological exegesis of Isaiah's vision in Byzantine textual and visual sources, the Virgin is the tongs that carry the burning coal without being burned, and offer it to humankind for the purification of its sins.<sup>85</sup> Central to the theological message of this miniature is the heavenly veil, lifted to reveal God. In both Jewish and Christian tradition, this is the archetype of the temple veil, dividing the visible from the invisible sky as the temple veil divides the holy place from the holy of holies.<sup>86</sup> Bearing in mind

the two golden cherubim. According to Christian exegesis, all these objects were prefigurations of the Virgin as container of the Logos Incarnate (see Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie* [n. 12 above], 71–78). The lower part of the Kokkinobaphos frontispiece discussed here shows the miracle of Aaron's flowering rod.

78 Compare Exodus 26:1 and 26:31 for the similar colors of the whole tabernacle and the veil of the holy of holies. See also Hutter, "Die Homilien," 255.

79 In the sixth Kokkinobaphos homily, when the high priest receives the spun purple from the Virgin's hands, he uses the word "tabernacle" (σκηνή, see n. 114, below) to describe the temple. This reference further enhances the interrelation between the various sacred spaces and enclosures of the Jewish tradition, as well as the connection proposed here between the purple thread prepared by the Virgin for the temple veil and the tabernacle depicted in the frontispiece to the sixth homily.

80 Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45.

81 For this exegetical tradition, followed also by Iakobos of Kokkinobaphos, see above, 270. This is only one of the possible interpretations of the cross above the tabernacle. Another allusion could be to the tabernacle as antetype of the Christian church and its sanctuary. Elements of the Kokkinobaphos miniatures that allude to this transition from the Old to the New Testament through the incarnation will be discussed in my forthcoming monograph. For an extensive analysis of the symbolic relationship between the tabernacle and Christ's body, as well as the tabernacle and the sanctuary of Christian churches, see Conostas, "Icon Screen" (n. 5 above).

82 Leviticus 16:29–34, cf. Hebrews 9:6–7.

83 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 119v (Stornajolo, *Omèlie di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 52); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 162r (Omont, *Homèlies du moine Jacques*, pl. XXI).

84 Hutter, "Die Homilien," 168–71, 342–57; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 64–66. See also Linardou, "Depicting the Salvation," 145–48 (all n. 1 above).

85 See n. 27 above.

86 For an analysis of this idea see N. Gioles, "Ἡ Ἀνάληψις τοῦ Χριστοῦ βάσει τῶν μνημείων τῆς Α' χιλιετηρίδος" (Ph.D. diss., University of Athens, 1981), 152–55, with further bibliography, of which note especially T. Klauser, "Der Vorhang vor dem Thron Gottes," *JbAC* 3 (1960): 141–42. See also Hutter, "Die Homilien," 349–54; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 65. Also Conostas, "Icon Screen."

the Pauline exegesis of Christ's body as the temple veil through which Christians can enter the heavenly kingdom (Hebrews 10:19–20), it is easy to see the heavenly veil in the miniature as a symbol of the incarnation of the Logos through which God was revealed not only to his highest angelic powers and his prophets, but finally to the entire world.<sup>87</sup> According to Hutter, there is a conceptual link between the heavenly veil and the purple thread the Virgin spins for the temple veil in the previous and following miniatures.<sup>88</sup> Seen together, the purple thread and the heavenly veil signify the investiture of the Logos in the purple of the flesh for the revelation of God to the world.<sup>89</sup>

The Christological meaning of the purple thread and the heavenly veil is also Mariological, in the sense that Christ took on human nature from his mother. It is with her own blood that Mary prepared the purple thread with which she wove the body of Christ. Her flesh became her son's through the intervention of the Holy Spirit that united her pure humanity with the supreme divinity of the Logos in Jesus Christ. This bond between Mary and her son is ingeniously visualized in this Kokkinobaphos miniature through the lifted veil that reveals the Pre-eternal Logos. The star-studded curtain is a symbol not only of Christ's human nature, through which divinity is made visible to human eyes, but of Mary as the container of Christ and the weaver of his human body. Two elements reveal this Mariological dimension: first, the sixty angels surrounding the veil are depicted without halos and standing mostly in pairs,<sup>90</sup> exactly like the sixty valiant

ones protecting the couch of Solomon, i.e. Mary, in the fourth frontispiece (fig. 15).<sup>91</sup> In other miniatures of the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries the same guardians surround the Virgin in her human form (fig. 16).<sup>92</sup> Their representation around the heavenly veil suggests that this, too, is a symbolic depiction of the Theotokos as bearer of Christ, and that the angels who protect Mary in other miniatures are the same heavenly creatures who stand close to the throne of God—a clear sign of her incomparable status.

Second, the representation of the lifted veil as the visible heaven relates it to the rich Byzantine literary tradition that describes Mary as heaven or wider than heaven because she contained the Sun of Justice, the creator of heaven whom heaven itself cannot contain.<sup>93</sup> At the beginning of his homily on the annunciation, Iakobos describes the Theotokos as “the highest and living sky that mysteriously incarnated the one who extended heavens as skin and circumscribed it as a tent.”<sup>94</sup> Toward the end of the same homily the

“Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited”), I take the details of that miniature to represent the iconographic intentions of the planner and miniaturist. According to my calculations, there are thirty angels above and thirty below the veil (excluding the cherubim, seraphim, and archangels around God's throne: unlike the rest, they bear halos). In this count of sixty I include faces that are partly visible (portions of facial features, such as eyes or mouth, discernible behind the complete faces). I do not count faces that are visible only as a neck and chin or the top of the head and hair (without facial features), of which I see three in the top group, above the veil, and one more below the veil. It seems that in his effort to depict so many faces in such a small space, the miniaturist might have gone over by a few heads, but sixty are clearly visible.

91 Hutter mentions that the pairs of angels around the heavenly veil look at each other like the angels around Solomon's couch, but she does not elaborate further on the connection between the two miniatures (Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 64). Hutter, “Die Homilien,” 171, mentions the myriad angels in Daniel's vision of God as another reference made by this miniature (Daniel 7:10).

92 For the representation of the sixty valiant ones around the couch of Solomon, around the Virgin on her way to the temple, and inside the sanctuary see Linardou, “Couch of Solomon” (n. 1 above), 77–81, figs. 1–3, with references to previous literature.

93 See, for example, Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος ἐν τῇ ὑμνογραφίᾳ* (n. 12 above), 54, “οὐρανός,” and the following quotations from Iakobos's homilies.

94 Homily 5.2, PG 127:632C. “Σήμερον ὁ ὑπέρτατος καὶ ἔμψυχος οὐρανὸς τὸν ἐκτείναντα τὸν οὐρανὸν ὥσει δέξριν, καὶ ὡς σκηνὴν αὐτὸν περιαγαγόντα, σαρκούμενον ἀπορρήτως συνέχει. Σήμερον ἡ δόξα τοῦ φωτός νεφέλη, τὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἥλιον ἐγκολπωσαμένη, παιδρὰς τῷ κόσμῳ τὰς μαρμαρυγὰς ἐξήπλωσε. Σήμερον ἡ ἀληθινὴ σκηνή, οὐ

87 See n. 22 above.

88 Hutter, “Die Homilien,” 354–56.

89 For the symbolism of veils as vehicles of divine or imperial revelation in ancient and medieval cultures and the influence of this idea on the Christian use of veils as symbols of the incarnation, see Evangelatou, “Purple Thread of the Flesh” (n. 5 above), 264–65, with references to further literature, among which note H. Papastavrou, “Le voile, symbole de l'Incarnation: Contribution à une étude sémanique,” *CahArch* 41 (1993): 141–68, esp. 156–61; B. A. Siegel, *Der Vorhang der Sixtinischen Madonna: Herkunft und Bedeutung eines Motivs der Marienikonographie* (Zurich, 1977); J. K. Eberlein, “The Curtain in Raphael's Sistine Madonna,” *ArtB* 65 (1983): 61–77, esp. 65–70, figs 10–11. See also Hutter, “Die Homilien,” 348–56.

90 The miniature in Vat. gr. 1162 (fig. 21) is larger and allows for a more accurate counting of the angels' faces than does the miniature in the smaller Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 162r, whose details are not easily discernible in the reproduction in Omont, *Homélies du moine Jacques*, pl. XXI. Since the Vatican copy was made first (Linardou,



Theotokos is again hailed as “our glorious sky” and as “the highest sky through which we enjoy the heavenly treasures.”<sup>95</sup> In the passage of the annunciation homily in which the Marian type of the tongs is mentioned, the Virgin is called “the heaven from which rose the Sun of Justice (Christ).”<sup>96</sup> Similar metaphors are employed throughout Iakobos’s Marian homilies.<sup>97</sup> In the context of this miniature, the heavenly veil containing the sun is analogous to the tongs that held the coal: both are symbols of the Theotokos bearing Christ. But, again, the veil is an even more multidimensional symbol of the relationship between mother and son. As a reference to the fabric of the incarnation, it alludes to their common human nature: their bond is visualized through the wondrous textile that stands both for Mary as the container of the creator of heaven and for Christ as heaven made visible and accessible through being invested with her flesh. This visual interpretation of Isaiah’s vision is particularly appropriate as an

διὰ συμβόλων καὶ τύπων τὸν νομοδότην, ἀλλά, ὡς αὐτὸς ἡδύοκῃσεν, οὐσιωδῶς εἰσδέχεται, καὶ πᾶσι τὸν τοῦ Πνεύματος διαγορεύει νόμον.” In this passage, heaven is described as a tent/tabernacle and Mary is referred to as both the heaven/cloud and the tabernacle. All these expressions parallel closely the way heaven is depicted in Isaiah’s vision (40:22), as both the firmament and a veil.

95 Homily 5.22, PG 127:657A. (Iakobos says to Gabriel, after the annunciation) “Ἰθι, τοῖς οὐρανίοις ἀπάγγειλον τὴν τοῦ ἡμετέρου οὐρανοῦ δόξαν· ἴθι, τὰ τῆς εὐρυχωροτέρας καὶ τιμιωτέρας αὐτῶν διήγησαι σκηνῆς παράδοξα.” Once more, the Virgin is described as both (wider than) heaven and as tabernacle, i.e., veil, comparable to the veil of heaven in Isaiah’s vision. Iakobos also hails Mary thus (Homily 5.22, PG 127:657C): “χαῖρε, ὑπερκεῖμενε οὐρανέ, δι’ οὗ τῶν οὐρανίων κατατρυφῶμεν θησαυρῶν.”

96 Homily 5.11, PG 127:644A. Mary is “ὁ τὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἥλιον ἀνατείλας ἡμῖν οὐρανός.”

97 The first homily starts with such a metaphor (PG 127:544–545A). Earth rejoices, for she receives upon her Mary, the sky brighter and more spacious than heaven, holding in her the Sun of Justice (Christ). At the Virgin’s birth (Homily 2.11, PG 127:584B), heaven rejoices at the arrival of the more spacious heaven (the Theotokos). She is “the heaven superior to heaven” (ὑπερουράνιος οὐρανός, Homily 2.19, PG 127:596B). She is higher and wider than heavens, more spacious than all creation, the abode of the Sun of Justice (Homily 3.10, 17, 28, PG 127:609A, 617D, 632A). Her soul is wider than heaven and her virtues brighter than the sun (Homily 4, Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 107v). She is the multi-starred firmament, the sun from which the body of justice rose (Homily 6.4, PG 127:664C). Earth is more beautiful than heaven for housing the Virgin, brighter than the sun and the sky (Homily 6.16, PG 127:677C). She is a tabernacle more spacious than heaven, a heaven wider than heavens, holding in her the Creator as if she were the sky (Homily 6.19, 32, 34, PG 127:681B, 693A, 696AB).

illustration of the homily on the annunciation, the event that initiated the physical weaving of Christ’s body with the thread of Mary’s blood.

## The Pantokrator’s Mantle

The final miniature of the annunciation homily elaborates on the idea of the bond between mother and son through another ingenious reinterpretation of the powerful fabric symbolism of the incarnation: it juxtaposes the thread spun in Mary’s hands and the finished veil lying on the heavenly throne, awaiting the return of the Logos Incarnate (fig. 23).<sup>98</sup> Before this image, the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries include several miniatures in which Mary speaks with Gabriel and finally accepts her role in the incarnation, all the while spinning the purple thread—an act symbolic of the creation of Christ’s body in her womb (cf. figs. 20, 22).<sup>99</sup> In the final annunciation miniature (fig. 23), Mary continues to spin as she looks toward heaven, where Gabriel returns and a host of angels venerate the throne prepared for Christ. According to Hutter, the mantle on the throne refers to the future ascension of Christ and his investiture as king of the world.<sup>100</sup> In other words, it alludes to the concluding moment of the incarnation, when the human nature put on by the Logos will be dressed in the glory of the Pantokrator.<sup>101</sup> Although Hutter does not

98 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 130v (Stornajolo, *Omélie di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 57); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 177v (Omout, *Homélies du moine Jacques*, pl. XXII) (both n. 1 above).

99 Vat. gr. 1162, fols. 115v, 118r, 122r, 124r, 126r, 127v (Stornajolo, *Omélie di Giacomo monaco*, pls. 49, 51, 53–56); Paris. gr. 1208, fols. 157r, 160v, 165v, 168v, 171v, 173v (Omout, *Homélies du moine Jacques*, pls. XIX–XXII). In all these miniatures Mary holds the raw wool with her raised left hand and the spindle with thread in her lowered right. This positioning of the hands suggests that she continues to work the material into thread.

100 Hutter, “Die Homilien,” 175–76, 362–66; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 68 (both n. 1 above). Compare the idea found in Homily 4.2:47–49 by Proklos of Constantinople (on Christ’s Nativity), where the incarnation is described as an imperial adventus, with Christ seated on the “richly appointed throne of the Virgin Theotokos” and wearing the “seedless flesh” instead of a “consular toga” (Constas, *Proclus of Constantinople* [n. 5 above], 230 [text], and 319 [commentary]). The Kokkinobaphos miniature discussed here seems to employ the same metaphors to refer not to the beginning but to the culmination of the incarnation, the glorification of human nature through the Logos Incarnate.

101 Of course Christ is the manifestation of the divine in the human, his two natures united from the first moment of his

suggest it, her observations indicate a direct connection between the spun thread and the woven veil depicted at the two ends of the diagonal axis of the composition. As the Virgin spins the thread and looks at the veil, she guides our attention from one to the other, as if to indicate that they are the starting and ending points of the divine plan of salvation; the spun thread, the beginning of the incarnation, will lead to the woven veil, the fulfillment of the incarnation's goal: the clothing of human nature in the glory of the new Adam.

The heavenly veil in the miniature of Isaiah's vision appears right after Gabriel's first salutation to Mary, and therefore emphasizes the shared human nature of mother and son: the same star-studded curtain stands for the bodies of both. The royal veil lying on the throne prepared for the ascent of Christ at the end of the annunciation homily refers to the culmination of the incarnation. This image thus highlights the link between mother and son through the motif of thread and textile, but also visualizes their difference through the *red* yarn of flesh that makes visible the *blue* fabric of heaven. The juxtaposition of spun thread and finished veil symbolizes the transference of humanity from Mary to Christ. At the same time it emphasizes the essential difference between the body of the mother, the provider of the thread of human flesh, and the body of the son, the unique human textile destined to clothe the divine. The purple thread in Mary's hands is depicted in the same intense red that makes it stand out as a symbol of the incarnation in all the Kokkinobaphos miniatures, while the veil awaiting the return of Christ to heaven is deep blue against the red cushions of the throne: she holds in her hands a symbol of her earthly humanity, which is the throne on which heavenly divinity is presented to the world so that human nature can return to paradise.<sup>102</sup>

conception in Mary's womb. This concept is inherent in the textile symbolism of the incarnation: the human fabric contains and through its actions reveals the divine essence behind it. But through the ascension of Christ, his human body physically enters paradise, marking the first return of human nature into the glory of Eden since the fall, and heralding the return of humankind to its original birthplace, in both body and soul, after the final resurrection at the end of time.

102 Indeed Mary is frequently described as Christ's throne in Byzantine literature, including the Kokkinobaphos homilies (e.g. 2.13–4, 2.19; PG 127:585C, 596B). See, for example, Eustratiades, *Η Θεοτόκος ἐν τῇ ὑμνογραφίᾳ* (n. 12 above), 28, “θρόνος”; 31 “καθέδρα.”

In other words, while both Isaiah's vision and the last annunciation image employ textile metaphors to refer to the incarnation, their visual vocabulary has significant differences that reflect central aspects of the theology of the incarnation: Mary contained the divine, Christ is divine. Mary is the ladder through which Christ descends to earth; the tongs holding the divine coal for the purification of human lips disgraced by the fruit of sin; the loom that weaves from her own flesh the veil revealing heaven to human eyes. But finally the finished veil is detached from the maternal loom and Christ acts on his own divine accord, becoming the path of humanity's return to paradise. The Marian ladder brings heaven to earth, so that Christ's divinely imbued body can take earth back to heaven. Indeed, the final annunciation miniature employs textile imagery to refer to the material fulfillment of the incarnation through the Virgin, but the emphasis is no longer on her role as the ladder of heavenly descent, but on the agency of God as the actor of earthly ascent.<sup>103</sup> This does not diminish in any way the contribution of the Theotokos to human salvation, it simply puts it in its proper theological perspective: she is most honored in all of creation, but she is not the creator; she is the instrument of salvation, but not the savior;

Compare the reference of Proklos of Constantinople mentioned in note 100 above.

103 Both Mary's gaze and Gabriel's flight toward the heavenly throne emphasize the notion of ascent. In addition, earth and heaven are united not through the Marian ladder but through the glow of light-reflective gold that can be considered symbolic of divine presence. For a discussion of light-reflective gold as a symbolic nexus between material and spiritual realms through divine intervention (the agency of light), and references to further literature, see M. Evangelatou, “Between East and West: The Symbolism of Space in the Art of Domenikos Theotokopoulos (El Greco),” in *Renaissance Encounters: Greek East and Latin West*, ed. M. S. Brownlee and D. Gondicas (Princeton, 2012), 151–52, with further literature in n. 12, including B. Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park, 2010), esp. chaps. 4 and 5. Recent literature on light with occasional references to the symbolism of gold can be found in *Hierotopy of Light and Fire in the Culture of the Byzantine World*, ed. A. Lidov (Moscow, 2013). I thank Jelena Bogdanovic for providing me a copy of this publication. See also H. Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion: Nature in Byzantine Art and Literature* (New York, 2012), 69–78, 90, 149–58, for references to the golden background of Byzantine images (as opposed to landscapes or architecture) as a symbol of the immutability of God and of spiritual realities as opposed to the fleeting character of the world, nature, and physical human experiences. The author includes in this discussion miniatures of the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries.



she is the human mother of God, but not herself divine. It is her pure humanity that God used as the key of salvation, because without it he could not become human himself in order to die and rise again, defeating death through death and restoring humanity to its original glory. The Theotokos has to be entirely human and entirely pure, and it is this unique combination of elements that raises her to the incomparable status of the Mother of God.<sup>104</sup> The Kokkinobaphos homilies do not undermine her role in any way, as has been suggested in the past.<sup>105</sup> On the contrary, they glorify her in theological terms appropriate for the economy of salvation, not simply as Mary, but as Theotokos. The last miniature I will examine offers further proof of this, through elaborate textile metaphors that emphasize the Virgin's motherhood in terms of the material production of the incarnation.

### Mary Delivers the Purple Thread to the Temple

Following the Tabernacle frontispiece to the sixth homily, the Virgin is represented collecting the spun thread, walking toward the temple, and finally delivering the purple to the high priest (fig. 25).<sup>106</sup> At this point, both

text and illustration present the Christological symbolism of the purple wool more emphatically than in any other part of the Kokkinobaphos homilies. The writer observes that while the Theotokos was holding the purple thread, she was ignorant of the fact that in her womb she was already weaving the royal purple of Christ's body.<sup>107</sup> In other words, Iakobos repeats that the purple is a type of the mystery of the incarnation. Moreover, in the following lines he mentions the high priest of the temple and introduces an important novelty in comparison to the apocryphal *Protevangelion* of James, considered in Byzantine culture to be the primary source for the events discussed here. While according to this text the high priest at the time was Samuel,<sup>108</sup> Iakobos replaces him with Symeon,<sup>109</sup> who would receive Christ at his presentation in the temple.<sup>110</sup> Both in the text and in the miniature, Symeon receives the purple thread with covered hands as if it was the body of Christ himself: his joy is comparable to the sentiments attributed to him in Byzantine homilies on the presentation of Christ to the temple,<sup>111</sup> and his posture is identical to the one he assumes when he holds Christ in Byzantine images of the presentation (fig. 26).<sup>112</sup>

The textual references to the purple as a symbol of Christ's body are especially powerful in this part of the sixth homily. When Symeon sees the Virgin approaching, he exclaims that the sacrifices offered to God by Abel and Abraham were prefigurations of the offering of the purple, which is more valuable and welcomed

104 See the observations by Cross, "St Mary in the Christian East" (n. 5 above) for insightful comments on the importance of Mary's motherhood in the economy of salvation, and especially the idea that she was exalted as Theotokos not only through the grace of God but through her own virtue, which rendered her a manifestation of human nature as God had intended it (esp. 9).

105 Linardou, "Depicting the Salvation" (n. 1 above), esp. 148–49, suggests that the representation of Christ instead of Mary on the Old Testament objects that appear as Marian prefigurations undermines her role. Linardou adds: "The typologies in the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts epitomize Mary's pronounced theological function as a medium and guarantor of the incarnation, yet this was not veneration of the Mother of God for her own sake, but more significantly a theological argument in defense of the perfect, ineffable and inexplicable unity of divinity and humanity in the person of Christ." It is precisely because of her motherhood that the Theotokos is so highly venerated in Eastern Orthodox theology, and not for her own sake. As the Mother of God she is the sacred vehicle of the incarnation and the most powerful intercessor on behalf of humanity. See the insightful comments by Cross, "St Mary in the Christian East."

106 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 142r (Stornajolo, *Omélie di Giacomo Monaco*, pl. 62); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 189v (Omont, *Homélies du moine Jacques*, pl. XXIV). Hutter, "Die Homilien," 178; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 71. The caption of this miniature reads: εἰσκομιδὴ τῆς πορφύρας (introduction of the purple).

107 Homily 6.4, PG 127:664B.

108 Chap. 10, Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha* (n. 9 above), 20.

109 Homily 6.5, PG 127:664CD.

110 Luke 2:25–35.

111 Homily 6.7, 9, PG 127:665C/669B. "Ὁ χαριεστάτης ἡμέρας, ἥτις τὴν τοιαύτην συνήνεγκεν εὐφροσύνην! / . . . φόβῳ καὶ χαρᾷ τὴν εἰργασμένην [ὁ Συμεὼν] δέχεται πορφύραν. . . ." Symeon's wonder and amazement at the mystery of the incarnation is expressed throughout his address to the Virgin, Homily 6.7–10, PG 127:665C–669C. For Symeon's joy upon receiving Christ in the temple, as described in Byzantine literature and represented in Byzantine art, see H. Maguire, *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (Princeton, 1981), 84–90.

112 For some examples, see H. Maguire, "The Iconography of Symeon with the Christ Child in Byzantine Art," *DOP* 34–35 (1980–81): 262–69, figs 1–14, and n. 2 (for previous literature on the subject). Hutter, "Die Homilien," claims that the Kokkinobaphos miniature of the delivery of the purple back to the temple has no iconographic models, but its similarities to the iconography of Christ's presentation to the temple suggest otherwise.

than any other.<sup>113</sup> Since the sacrifices of Abel and Abraham were interpreted in Byzantine literature and visual culture as types of Christ's crucifixion and the Eucharist,<sup>114</sup> this comparison elevates the purple thread to a symbol of Christ's eucharistic body. When Symeon takes the purple thread from Mary's hands, he greets her as the source and container of that sacrificial body by employing a series of symbolic images with obvious eucharistic significance: she is the vine providing the grape (Christ) from which is produced the wine of immortality; which fills the krater of salvation that offers incorruptibility; and she is the flourishing tree, whose fruit becomes the nourishment of immortality for those who partake of the Eucharist.<sup>115</sup> It is probable

that when writing about the presentation of the purple thread to the temple, Iakobos was inspired by Byzantine homilies on the presentation of Christ in which the event, often described in specifically eucharistic terms, is seen to foreshadow Christ's sacrifice.<sup>116</sup> However, I know of no other text in the whole corpus of Byzantine literature that contains such obvious and emphatic parallels between the presentation of the purple thread and

113 Homily 6.9, PG 127:669B-C. "Τί τοιοῦτον ἐν τῷ περιωνύμῳ τούτῳ ναῶ ἀντεῖται τιμίον; Ποῖον οὕτω καθηγιασμένον κειμήλιον ἐν τῇ ἀγίᾳ ταύτῃ καθιερώθη σκηνῇ; Τούτο παντὸς καλλιερήματος σεμνότερον, τοῦτο πάσης θυσίας ιερώτερον, τοῦτο προσφορᾶς ἀπάσης εὐπροσδεκτότερον, ὑπὲρ τὴν Ἀβελ ἀπαρχὴν, ὑπὲρ τὴν Ἀβραὰμ ὀλοκαύτωσιν, ὑπὲρ ἅπαν ὀλοκάρπωμα διακαίων. Ὁ γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι τυποῦντες προέφερον, νῦν παραδόξως τελούμενον ἐν τῇ παναμώμῳ προσκομιζούσῃ τοῦτο κατανοεῖται."

114 For example, in the *Christian Topography* (5.101–4, ed. Wolska-Conus, *Topographie chrétienne* [n. 22 above], 3:153–57), Abraham's sacrifice is clearly described as a type of the crucifixion, while the illustration of this passage emphasizes the eucharistic aspect of the event by depicting the altar in the shape of a chalice emitting fire (cod. Vat. gr. 699, fol. 59r, cod. Sinait. gr. 1186, fol. 98r). See K. Weitzmann and G. Galavaris, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Illuminated Greek Manuscripts, From the Ninth to the Twelfth Century* (Princeton, 1991), fig. 160. The same exegesis is presented, for example, in the sixth- and seventh-century mosaic decoration of the churches of St. Vitale and St. Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna: both sacrifices (of Abel and Abraham) are depicted in the sanctuary and the iconography emphasizes their eucharistic significance. See S. Schrenk, *Typos und Antitypos in der frühchristlichen Kunst*, *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 21 (Münster, 1995), 14, pls. 2–3, 18. See also n. 58 above.

115 Homily 6.7–8, PG 127:668B–C. "Ὡ τῆς τοῦ γένους εὐφορίας! Εἰς ὅσον τὸν καρπὸν ἐπλεόνασεν! Ὑπερῆρε τὴν τῶν ἀγγέλων εὐθουνουμένην φύσιν τῷ μεγαλοφυεῖ τῆς καρποφορίας ταύτης βλαστήματι. Ἐξέτεινε τὴν παραφυάδα ταύτην ἕως θαλάσσης, καὶ ἕως οὐρανοῦ τὸ ἑαυτῆς ἀνέδωκε κλῆμα, τὴν ἀποτίστως φύουσαν ἀμπελον, τὴν τῷ ἀγίῳ Πνεύματι πυκαζομένην, τὴν παινομένην τῇ χάριτι, τὴν τὸν ἀγεώργητον καρποφοροῦσαν βότρυ, ἐξ οὗ τὸ τῆς ἀθανασίας ἀποθλίβεται γλεύκος, ἀφ' οὗ τὸ τῆς μυστικῆς εὐφροσύνης προχέεται βεῖδρον, ἐξ οὗπερ ὁ σωτήριος πληρούμενος κρατὴρ, ἀφ' ἀθανασίας τοὺς μεδέοντας ἐμπλήσει. Ὡ φυτοῦ τῶν οὐρανίων ἀνίδων ἐξικνουμένου, ὅπερ αὐτοὺς τε παρέλθει, καὶ πάσας νοεῖρας ὑπερβήσεται δυνάμεις! Ὡ κατασκίου δένδρου τοῦ πᾶσαν λογικὴν κατακαλύψαντος φύσιν, καὶ παντὸς ὑπεραρθέντος νοουμένου ὑψώματος! ἐξ οὗπερ ὁ φυτουργὸς τῷ συγκεκαλυμμένῳ τρόπῳ, ὡς ἐκ δασέος ὁρους ἀνατελεῖ, καὶ συστελεῖ τοὺς τύπους εἰς τὴ ἀληθείας κατὰπανσιν· οὗ μεταλφθισόμενος ὁ καρπὸς ἀθανασίας τροφὴ

τοῖς μεδέουσιν ὀφθῆσεται." The exaltation of Mary as a container of the Eucharist (because she holds Christ himself in or on her) is standard in Byzantine literature, including the Kokkinobaphos homilies. She is regularly compared to an altar, paten, chalice, krater, or the golden jar of the manna (an Old Testament prefiguration of the Christian eucharistic vessels). See Ledit, *Marie dans la liturgie*, 73–74; Eustratiades, *Ἡ Θεοτόκος ἐν τῇ ὑμνογραφίᾳ*, 17 (δίσκος), 38 (κρατὴρ), 40 (κύπελλον), 73 (στάμνος), 79 (τράπεζα) (both n. 12 above). Relevant references from the Kokkinobaphos homilies (not exhaustive) are: Homily 2.6, PG 127:567C; 2.19, PG 127:596B; Homily 3.9, PG 127:609A; 3.11, PG 127:609C. For visual depictions of Mary as a eucharistic container in Byzantine culture see n. 14 above (the chalice-like container of the purple wool with which Mary is connected in the annunciation scenes of the Pantokrator Psalter and the Euphrasian Basilica, or the altar on which appears the purple wool, next to Mary dressed in the same color, in Paris, gr. 510); also Evangelatou, "Purple Thread of the Flesh" (n. 5 above), 267–68. A more detailed treatment of this subject will appear in Evangelatou, "Byzantium's Holy Grail: the Theotokos and the Eucharist" (forthcoming).

116 See, for example Cyril of Jerusalem, *In occursum Domini*, PG 33:1192B. Amphilochios of Iconium, *De occursum Domini*, PG 39:57A–C. Gregory of Nyssa, *De occursum Domini*, PG 46:1160D–1161A, 1165D, 1176A. Chrysostom, *De occursum Domini* (spurious), PG 50:811. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarium in Lucam*, PG 72:501A–C, 505C; idem, *In occursum Domini*, PG 77:1044D–1045A, 1049B. Modestus of Jerusalem, *In occursum*, PG 86.2:3277A. Hesychios presbyter of Jerusalem, *In praesentatione Domini*, PG 93:1468C, 1469D–1472A. Leontios of Cyprus, *In Symeonem*, PG 93:1580C. Andrew of Crete, *In occursum*, PG 97:1436B. Cosmas the Hymnographer, *In occursum*, PG 98:512D. Theophylaktos of Bulgaria, *Enarratio in evangelium Lucae*, PG 123:732A. Euthymios Zigabenos, *Commentarium in Lucam*, PG 129:893B. See also the spurious homily of Athanasios (attributed to George of Nicomedia, in Maguire, "Symeon with the Christ Child" [n. 112 above]), *In occursum Domini*, PG 28:980D, 996BC. For the connection between Christ's presentation to the temple and the crucifixion in Byzantine art and literature see also Maguire, "Symeon with the Christ Child," esp. 266–69. See also Conostas, *Proclus of Constantinople* (n. 5 above), 330–31; A. Weyl Carr, "The Presentation of an Icon at Mount Sinai," *Δελτ. Χριστ. Αρχ. Ετ.* 17 (1993–94): 239–48, esp. 245–47, for discussion of a homily on Christ's presentation to the temple by the twelfth-century Neophytos of Cyprus, where Mary's offering of Christ to Symeon is described in prominently eucharistic terms (some of which are reminiscent of Iakobos's description of Mary offering the purple).



the offering of Christ's eucharistic body, which are both accomplished through the Virgin. At this point in the two Kokkinobaphos homiliaries, the previous textual and visual references to the Christological symbolism of the purple thread and to Mary's role as the weaver of Christ's body culminate in a powerful statement that leaves no doubt about the prominence of this evocative symbolic concept in Byzantine culture.

Within the limits of this article I cannot present all the arguments in support of my interpretations, nor examine all the miniatures of the two Kokkinobaphos manuscripts that relate to the theme of threads and veils as symbols of the incarnation. My aim is to stimulate interest in a multifaceted theme that I will fully address in a forthcoming monograph.<sup>117</sup> However, what has been said up to now allows me to proceed with two observations. While tracing the use of fleece, threads, and veils as symbolic of the incarnation, I identified iconographic peculiarities and interrelations of word and image that corroborate the opinion of Hutter, Linardou, and other scholars on the close collaboration of Iakobos with the illustrator of his two homiliaries.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, the impressive concentration of spinning, veiling, and clothing imagery in both the text and the miniatures of these two codices is, I believe, unparalleled in any other monument of Byzantine art.

This emphasis on the symbolism of the purple and the weaving of Christ's body by the Theotokos could be related to the identity of the commissioner, who in all probability was the sebastokratorissa Eirene: as a πορφυρένδυτη, a purple-dressed member of the imperial

family with the privileges of a πορφυρογέννητη, a purple-born princess,<sup>119</sup> Eirene must have been familiar with the complex symbolism of the precious purple.<sup>120</sup> As a woman, she knew that spinning and weaving were symbols of female virtue,<sup>121</sup> which the Virgin, the weaver of the incarnation, had "elevated in symbols of universal salvation."<sup>122</sup> It is highly likely that Iakobos of Kokkinobaphos, in collaboration with the painter, wanted to address, cultivate, direct, or even flatter his female patroness's awareness of the polyvalent significance of weaving by orchestrating numerous textual and visual references to the fabrication of Christ's purple mantle of humanity by the Theotokos.<sup>123</sup> The extent to which Eirene herself might have influenced the choice of subject matter and iconography in accordance with her own interests and aspirations is an intriguing question that remains open to speculation. In the second part of this article I would like to make some observations that could shed light on the ways Eirene might have viewed a number of prominent themes in the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries. I will analyze evidence that supports the suggestion that she commissioned the manuscripts, and I will discuss how

119 See n. 154 below. The Greek neologism πορφυρένδυτη reflects Byzantine usage, such as χρυσένδυτος and cognates.

120 See n. 12 above.

121 For the importance of spinning and weaving in the life of Byzantine women see Ph. Koukoules, *Βυζαντινῶν Βίος καὶ Πολιτισμός*, 6 vols. (Athens, 1948–57), 2:12–16, 202–5; Conostas, "Weaving the Body of God," 18–88; idem, *Proclus of Constantinople*, 343–45, with further literature (both n. 5 above); E. Nardi, *Né sole né luna: L'immagine femminile nella Bisanzio dei secoli XI e XII*, Fondazione Carlo Marchi, Quaderni 16 (Florence, 2002), 43–45; M. Fulghum Heinz, "Work: The Art and Craft of Earning a Living," in Kalavrezou, *Byzantine Women* (n. 5 above), 140–41. See also Wayland-Barber, *Women's Work* (as n. 75 above), esp. 101–26 with reference to the Minoan and Mycenaean world and the Homeric epics (references to traditions of the ancient world that lived on in medieval societies).

122 Cf. Conostas, *Proclus of Constantinople*, 317 ff., 332–38; Kalavrezou, *Byzantine Women*, 158, cat. no. 83, entry by A. Walker and I. Kalavrezou.

123 Conostas, "Weaving the Body of God," 188–90, and idem, *Proclus of Constantinople*, 347–51, has made a similar proposal regarding the homilies dedicated to the Virgin by Patriarch Proklos of Constantinople, convincingly arguing that the patriarch's extensive references to the weaving of Christ's body in the Virgin's womb were inspired by or related to the empress Pulcheria, a virgin who spent a large part of her time weaving in the seclusion of the palace, offering thus a sign of her bodily and spiritual dedication to Christ, in imitation of the Virgin Mary.

117 Three more miniatures that will be discussed in a future publication (for which see n. 4 above) are the headpieces of the fifth and sixth homily, and the scene of the Annunciation at the Well (for a brief mention of the latter see M. Evangelatou, "Το νήμα της Ενσάρκωσης: Ο συμβολισμός της πορφύρας στις εικονογραφημένες ομιλίες του Ιακώβου Κοκκινοβάφου," in *Εικοστό πέμπτο συμπόσιο βυζαντινής και μεταβυζαντινής αρχαιολογίας και τέχνης, πρόγραμμα και περιλήψεις εισηγήσεων και ανακοινώσεων* [Athens, 2005], 37–38). The conceptual links between the frontispiece miniatures and the relevant homilies of the two codices, as well as the relationship of the spinning and weaving symbolism to the patroness Eirene and Byzantine female ideals and gender roles will also be discussed in more detail in that monograph.

118 Hutter, "Die Homilien," 240–41, 396. Anderson, "Illustrated Sermons" (n. 2 above), 101, says that Iakobos and the painter were so successful in their collaboration "that at times it almost seems as if the same man both wrote and illustrated the book." See also Linardou, "Couch of Solomon" (n. 1 above), 75.

they can be seen as sites of a dynamic presentation and negotiation of female identity at the intersection of the male producers' conceptions and the female user's perceptions of the visual and textual material.<sup>124</sup>

## PART TWO EXPLORING GENDER CONSTRUCTS

The theological connotations of the thread and textile symbols discussed above were deeply embedded in Byzantine culture and would have been apparent to any Byzantine reader of the Kokkinobaphos homilies. However, textile production, which was inextricably linked to female identity, also had strong gender implications in Byzantium. Likewise, perceptions of the Theotokos were very influential in the constructions of gender. Consequently, the Kokkinobaphos codices offer valuable material for investigating gender constructs with shifting implications in the eyes of male and female viewers.

We know that the author of the homilies was male and we assume that the miniaturist was as well. The possibility that the commissioner of at least one of the two codices was female creates a field of dynamic gender tensions that might have influenced both the production and the reception of the two homilies. Although the identity of the Kokkinobaphos commissioner cannot be proven beyond doubt, most scholars consider the sebastokratorissa Eirene to be the likeliest candidate. The following analysis supports this suggestion and considers the ways that Eirene and her contemporaries might have read the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts. But even if someone other than Eirene commissioned them, we can assume they were intended for a small number of individuals belonging to the same social and cultural circle. Readers probably included both females and males, and notions of femininity expressed through Mary and her textile work would have had implications for both, since the construction of gender in patriarchal societies defines men and women in opposition to one another. Still, the prominence of Mary and textile production in the Kokkinobaphos homilies suggests that they would have had particular relevance for female readers.

In the following pages I assume that Eirene sebastokratorissa was indeed the commissioner of at least the Vatican Kokkinobaphos and I develop my gender analysis around her. I introduce this part of my exploration with a brief overview of previous arguments supporting this hypothesis and present some new material. In addition, following Linardou's observations, I explore the idea of Iakobos as the possible recipient of the Paris Kokkinobaphos, in order to investigate further the male-female dynamics operating on multiple levels in the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts. I examine significant iconographic differences between the two homilies, ones that create subtle variations in the representation of sacred history to target their male or female recipient with divergent understandings of traditional gender roles and models. Then I contextualize gender perceptions in Byzantine culture in order to provide a framework for better understanding the homilies. In the final part of the study I return to the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts, examining the prominence of motherhood in a number of miniatures that reinforce the argument that Eirene Sebasokratorissa, a woman who publicly presented herself as a pious and caring mother, was indeed their commissioner; and that the miniatures, in synergy with the text, contain multilayered references to gender that would have been read in a variety of ways by their male and female audience. I conclude that this multiplicity is a basic component of the powerful visual impact and the deep cultural significance of the Kokkinobaphos codices.

### Eirene Sebastokratorissa as the Kokkinobaphos Commissioner

We know that Eirene sebastokratorissa was an active patroness of art and literature and that Iakobos was her spiritual advisor. His letters to her survive in an elegant manuscript with script, ruling, and decorative headpieces similar to the two Kokkinobaphos codices.<sup>125</sup> This set of letters and the two manuscripts with Iakobos's Marian homilies, our only sources on him, have encouraged scholars to identify the commissioner of the two homilies with Eirene. Indeed, the

124 A summary of the following material was also presented at the 2009 CAA conference, in a paper entitled "Purple-Spun and Purple-Dressed: Imaging Mary for a Byzantine Princess."

125 For all these issues see the literature mentioned in n. 2 above. On the similarities between the two Kokkinobaphos homilies and the collection of letters see Anderson, "Illustrated Sermons" (n. 2 above), 85–95.



Marian focus of the homilies and the prominent presentation of themes from the world of women (such as thread production, motherhood, and households populated by housewives and their maids) in both the text and the miniatures corroborate the hypothesis that a woman was involved in the commission and use of the manuscripts.<sup>126</sup>

As I will discuss below, motherhood is particularly exalted in the pages of the homiliaries. This fits with Eirene's access to social recognition and power through her role as a respectable mother, especially after the death of her husband in 1142, when her main concern and source of support were her children.<sup>127</sup> The unparalleled concentration of textile symbols in the Kokkinobaphos codices is also consistent with Eirene's particular interest in textile production.<sup>128</sup> As I have proposed elsewhere, there are some suggestive parallels between Iakobos's letters to Eirene and the illustrated homilies, such as an exceptional interest in books, the protective power of holy scripture against the forces of evil, the need to search for meaning below the surface of things, and the importance of Mary as a model of Christian virtue.<sup>129</sup> To these I would like

126 These issues are the subject of a more detailed analysis in the following pages.

127 See the discussion of Eirene's devotional offerings to various churches, accompanied by epigrams with prayers about her children, discussed below, 293–94.

128 This interest is attested in two basic ways: first, Eirene's dedication of precious textiles to a number of churches, discussed below, 293–94. Second, two surviving poems commissioned by Eirene and written by Manganeios Prodromos, which describe a luxurious tent used by the Sebastokratorissa, and discuss its meaning from two different points of view. See J. C. Anderson and M. J. Jeffreys, "The Decoration of the Sebastokratorissa's Tent," *Byzantion* 64 (1994): 8–18. These poems are the subject of a number of forthcoming articles by Margaret Mullett, whom I thank for sharing a copy of her work before publication. See "Tented Ceremony: Ephemeral Performances under the Komnenoi," in *Court Ceremonies and Rituals of Power in Byzantium and the Medieval Mediterranean: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. A. Beihammer, S. Constantinou, and M. Parani (Leiden, 2013), 487–513, and "Experiencing the Byzantine Tent, Experiencing the Byzantine Tent," in *Experiencing Byzantium*, ed. C. Nesbitt and M. Jackson, SPBS 18 (Farnham, 2013), 269–91. A third article, "Reading the Tent: Four Byzantine Tent Poems," in *Reading Byzantium*, ed. T. Shawcross, I. Toth, and N. Gaul (Cambridge, forthcoming), focuses more closely on the poems.

129 See M. Evangelatou, "Pursuing Salvation through a Body of Parchment: Books and Their Significance in the Illustrated Homilies by Iakobos of Kokkinobaphos," *MedSt* 68 (2006): 239–84, esp. 243–44, 255–65, 282–83.

to add a prominent interest in the Holy Trinity, which further reinforces the hypothesis that the homiliaries were addressed to Eirene. Among Iakobos's letters is a homily "on faith, against the *pneumatomachoi*" (those who do not believe in the Holy Ghost, literally "combatants against the Spirit"); here the author vehemently proclaims the equality and communion among the three persons of the Holy Trinity.<sup>130</sup> Similar ideas are visualized in two striking and unusual miniatures of the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries that reflect Iakobos's devotion to the Holy Trinity. First the Godhead ordering Gabriel to deliver the news of the incarnation to Mary is represented as three co-enthroned identical young men, a unicum in Byzantine iconography.<sup>131</sup> After Mary receives the initial angelic salutation at the well and rushes back in her house in fear, she approaches a similar throne on which are represented three significant objects: purple raw wool, a spindle with thread originating from this wool, and a golden cup.<sup>132</sup> As I will discuss in more detail elsewhere, these three co-enthroned objects were probably intended as another ingenious visualization of the Trinity, whose will is fulfilled as the incarnation is announced to the Theotokos.<sup>133</sup> The extraordinary attention given to the Holy Trinity in both miniatures is in accord with the homily on the same subject in Iakobos's letters to Eirene, a theological exposition that was probably intended for her edification in dogma, which was also one of the purposes of the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries.

130 Published in Jeffreys and Jeffreys, *Iacobi Monachi Epistulae* (n. 2 above) 182–202.

131 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 113v (Stornajolo, *Omèlie di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 48); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 153v (Omont, *Homèlies du moine Jacques*, pl. XIX). Hutter, "Die Homilien," 159–61, 327–41; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 60–62 (all n. 1 above).

132 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 117v (Stornajolo, *Omèlie di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 50); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 159v (Omont, *Homèlies du moine Jacques*, pl. XX). Hutter, "Die Homilien," 162–65; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 62.

133 This subject will be treated extensively in my forthcoming monograph (n. 4 above). Very briefly I mention here two of my main arguments in support of the Trinitarian interpretation of the three objects: first, the throne on which they appear is almost identical to the one on which the Trinity is enthroned a few folios earlier, and is not depicted anywhere else in the two homiliaries. Second, the raw wool and spun thread are consubstantial, and the one begets the other, exactly like Father and Son, while the golden cup is equal in importance (co-enthroned) but also of different properties, exactly like the Holy Spirit, which turns people into vessels of grace when it overshadows them with its power.

Scholars have also noted that the interest in the Song of Songs evident in Iakobos's letters to the sebastokratorissa is also echoed in his Marian homilies, since the couch of Solomon is prominent in both the full-page frontispiece to the fourth homily and an accompanying essay on its Christological, Mariological, and moral meaning (a special treatment not lavished on any of the other five frontispieces).<sup>134</sup> Even a reference to the word εἰρήνη (peace) in the same short exposition on the couch of Solomon seems to have been intended as a pun on the name of Eirene sebastokratorissa, a practice similarly observed in Iakobos's letters to her, where he integrates the word εἰρήνη or its derivatives in his prose in order to create suggestive references.<sup>135</sup> Since this evidence offers substantial support for the identification of Eirene as the commissioner of the two Kokkinobaphos homiliaries, I would like to analyze it a bit further.

### The Sebastokratorissa Eirene and the Couch of Solomon

In the first part of the exegetical text dedicated to the couch of Solomon (Song of Songs 3:7), Iakobos interprets the couch as a prefiguration of the Theotokos who brings forth Christ/Solomon. The crucial sentence of his exposition is: "So, it is obvious that another Solomon is signified by this [reference of the Song of Songs]. He was also born into flesh from David's seed; his name is peace (εἰρήνη) and he is the true king of Israel."<sup>136</sup> Clearly Iakobos means Christ, who in

Christian exegesis is the New Solomon, the "peaceful" one according to the translation of the king's Hebrew name. In other words, the standard Christian interpretation of the Old Testament theme of the couch of Solomon is that it prefigures the incarnation and its purpose: Christ is born through Mary (the royal couch) from David's bloodline, in order to bring peace to the world and become the savior and king of the true Israel, the Christian flock.<sup>137</sup>

In this passage, Iakobos does not translate the Hebrew name Solomon as "peaceful" (εἰρηνικός), as was traditional in patristic exegesis;<sup>138</sup> instead he uses the word "peace" (εἰρήνη), in other words the name of the sebastokratorissa. Literary puns on the name of the person an author wished to eulogize were not unusual in Byzantine culture,<sup>139</sup> and Iakobos himself used

137 See, for example: Theodoret, *Quaestiones in libros Regnorum et Paralipomenon*, PG 80:813A; idem, *Interpretatio in Psalmos*, PG 80:1429AB. Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum canticorum*, ed. H. Langerbeck, *Gregorii Nysseni opera* (Leiden, 1960), 6:201. Origen, *Commentarii in evangelium Joannis* 10.39.267, lines 36–41, ed. C. Blanc, *Origène, Commentaire sur saint Jean*, vol. 2, SC 157 (Paris, 1970), 546; idem, *Selecta in Psalmos*, PG 12:1521D; idem, *Fragmenta ex commentariis in Proverbia*, PG 13:17B. Didymus, *Fragmenta in Psalmos*, frag. 748, ed. E. Mühlenberg, *Psalmenkommentare aus der Kettenüberlieferung*, vol. 2, Patristische Texte und Studien 16 (Berlin, 1977), 97. Photios, *Epistulae et Amphilochia*, *Amphilochia* 326:6–13, ed. Laourdas and Westerink (n. 22 above), 6.1:137. Michael Psellos, *Poemata*, Poem 2:39–40, Poem 53:260–64, Poem 54:817–21, ed. L. G. Westerink, *Michaelis Pselli poemata* (Stuttgart, 1992), 15, 311, 363.

138 In addition to the sources mentioned in the previous note, see Theodoret, *Explanatio in Canticum canticorum*, PG 81:120CD; Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum canticorum*, ed. Langerbeck, *Gregorii Nysseni opera*, vol. 6:48; Origen, *Commentarii in evangelium Joannis* 6.1.5.6–7 (lines 31–33), ed. Blanc, 2:130.

139 See, for example, the pun on the name of the fifth-century empress Eudokia: according to the historian Malalas, when she renewed the walls of Jerusalem she claimed that Psalm 50:2 (ἀγάθυνον, κύριε, ἐν τῇ εὐδοκίᾳ σου τὴν Σιών, καὶ οἰκοδομηθήτω τὰ τεῖχη Ἱερουσαλήμ) was a prophecy about her. In a similar vein, Corippus writes that the construction of Hagia Sophia by Justinian foretold the ascent to power of the empress Sophia, who ruled after Justinian's death alongside her husband Justin II. See A. McClanan, *Representations of Early Byzantine Empresses, Image and Empire* (New York, 2002), 21, 151. For a pun on the name of empress Eirene Doukaina by her daughter Anna Komnene, see *Alexiad*, 12.3.8.6–7, ed. B. Leib, *Anna Komnène, Alexiade*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1945, repr. 1967), 63: "... ἡ περὶ τὰ πράγματα δραστηριότης καὶ τὸ κατὰ τῶν παθῶν ἐπιπληκτικώτατον καὶ ἡ ἀνυπόκριτος πίστις, ὡς Σολομώντι δοκεῖ. Οὕτως ἡ ἐμὴ μήτηρ καὶ πρὸς τοιοῦτους πολέμους ἐσκεύαστο, τὰ δ' ἄλλα εἰρηνικωτάτη ἦν κατὰ τοῦνομα." Translated by E. A. Dawes, *The Alexiad of Princess Anna*

134 This is a self-contained text that does not form part of either the third or the fourth homily, but is instead included between them; it explains the message of the couch of Solomon, which appears in the frontispiece to the fourth homily. See Linardou, "Couch of Solomon" (n. 1 above), 84, with references to earlier literature.

135 This observation is made by Linardou, *ibid.*, 80, n. 21, on the basis of reports by Jeffreys and Jeffreys that puns on Eirene's name are included in Iakobos's letters (the text of the letters was not yet published at the time Linardou was writing her article). For some relevant cases see *idem*, *Iacobi Monachi Epistulae* [n. 2 above], 17, 24, 36, 119). To mention two examples in detail (*ibid.*, 24, 36), in his eighth letter Iakobos rejoices at receiving εἰρηνικῶν γραμμάτων (peaceful letters/Eirene's letters). In his eleventh letter, he prompts Eirene to praise God's magnanimity so that she will gain εἰρήνην πρὸς τοὺς ὁμοψύχους (in other words feel what her name suggests, fulfill her destiny, by being at peace with those who have the same values as she does).

136 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 80v. "... οὐκοῦν εὐδὴλον ὅτι ἄλλος Σολομών διὰ τούτου σημαίνεται· ὁ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐκ τοῦ σπέρματος Δαβὶδ τὸ κατὰ σάρκα γενόμενος· ὃ ὄνομα εἰρήνη· ὁ ἀληθινὸς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ βασιλεὺς."



them in letters he addressed to Eirene. However, the pun employed in the homilies is much more forceful and striking than anything included in his letters: not only does it alter established exegetical terminology, it also disrupts the syntactical structure of the sentence by using a female name (Eirene) for a male subject (Christ). This syntactical inconsistency never occurs in traditional patristic exegesis on the couch of Solomon, which employs the male adjective εἰρηνικός to refer to Jesus.<sup>140</sup> It should also be noted that syntactical anacolutha are not normally employed by Byzantine authors who indulge in puns, precisely because harmoniously inserting an allusion to somebody's name in a smooth syntactical structure is part of the artistry of the literary device. Iakobos, in contrast, seems to have purposefully employed the syntactical anacoluthon of Christ as εἰρήνη in order to increase the effect of the pun: the syntactical inconsistency would enhance the surprise that Byzantine readers would have experienced because of the disruption of the expected exegetical terminology. In these ways, the word εἰρήνη was further highlighted, amplifying the effect of the pun as a reference to the commissioner of the codex.<sup>141</sup>

*Comnena* (New York, 2009), 307: "Her activity in business, her stern resistance to passion and her genuine loyalty were such as Solomon lauds. Thus my mother was prepared for wars of that kind, but in other respects she was as peaceful as her name."

140 Peace (εἰρήνη) was some times used metonymically for Christ in sources that interpret Solomon, the peaceful one, as Christ's antetype. However, as far as I know, in all the sources the reference to Solomon/Christ as εἰρηνικός is indispensable, and the reference to Christ as εἰρήνη is usually omitted. In Iakobos's exegesis, the opposite is the case, making his text exceptional. See, for example, Theodoret, *Quaestiones in libros Regnorum et Paralipomenon*, PG 80:813A, "Καὶ γὰρ Σολομὼν εἰρηνικός ἐρμηνεύεται· καὶ ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν εἰρήνη προσαγορεύεται." Origen, *Commentarii in evangelium Joannis* 10.39.267, lines 36–41, ed. Blanc, 2:546, "ἡ τελειοτάτη εἰρήνη ἔσται ὅτε Χριστὸς ἔσται Σαλομών, ὅπερ ἐρμηνεύεται «εἰρηνικός.»" Origen, *Selecta in Psalmos*, PG 12:1521D, "Εἰς Σαλομών, κ. τ. ἐ. Εἰς Σαλομών τὸν υἱὸν Δαυὶδ· «Βίβλος γὰρ γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ.» Σαλομών γὰρ ἐρμηνεύεται εἰρηνικός· αὐτὸς γὰρ ἔστιν ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν." In all these cases the syntax is smooth, without the unusual effect of the Kokkinobaphos phrase, in which a female word is the name of a male subject (ὃ ὄνομα εἰρήνη).

141 For a reference to the political allusions that the sebastokratorissa might have identified in this passage of the homilies, concerning her hopes for her oldest son's claim to the throne as heir to the emperor Manuel Komnenos, see M. Evangelatou, "Motherhood and Politics in Twelfth-Century Constantinople: Eirene Sebastokratorissa and the Couch of Solomon in the Kokkinobaphos Homilies" (forthcoming).

It is worth noting that the exegetical exposition on the couch of Solomon with the pun on Eirene is included in both the Vatican and the Paris Kokkinobaphos. If one codex was produced for the sebastokratorissa, who was the recipient of the other? Linardou has convincingly argued that the Paris copy was destined for Iakobos himself.<sup>142</sup> If that was indeed the case, he had good reason to appreciate the pun on Eirene, both because he was its author and because he was her spiritual advisor. In other words, he must have been proud to be so closely connected with a prominent lady of the imperial court, and probably wished to retain the allusion to her in his own copy of the homilies. If his fellow monks were also among the readers of the Paris manuscript,<sup>143</sup> the reference to Eirene would be a source of pride for them as well, since it meant there was a well-connected author in their community. It is also possible that Eirene was responsible for the particularly high expense of producing the Paris copy. Perhaps she intended to cultivate a mutually beneficial relationship with this monastic community, offering Iakobos and his brethren a precious edifying book as proof of her piety and as an instrument in their devotional practice, and expecting in return their gratitude and prayers. The lack of a colophon or an introductory dedication referring to such intentions in the Paris Kokkinobaphos does not mean that they did not exist. Perhaps the very striking pun on Eirene's name that was included in the Paris copy might have been intended as a humble yet forceful reminder of the identity of the benefactor for whom the monks should pray: though not mentioned directly, Eirene was very much present at the heart of the book, both in terms of her contribution to its creation and the appearance of her name in an exceptional biblical exposition in the center of the codex, literally between the first three and the last three homilies.

It should be mentioned that along with suggesting that the recipient of the Paris codices was male, Linardou has corroborated the hypothesis that the Vatican copy, the first to be produced, was destined for a female reader, whom she identifies with Eirene. Her argument that there is a gender difference between the two recipients centers on the significant iconographic variations in the

142 Linardou, "Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited" (n. 1 above), 387–90.

143 As suggested by Linardou, *ibid.*, 397.

two manuscripts' miniatures of the fall.<sup>144</sup> Her observations have important implications for the gender focus of my analysis, so I will return to them in more detail below. I will begin with an examination of Linardou's hypothesis that the Paris Kokkinobaphos was produced for a male recipient, namely Iakobos the monk.

### Iakobos the Monk and the Paris Kokkinobaphos

According to Linardou, the most important evidence that the Paris copy was produced for Iakobos comes from the miniature at the beginning of the manuscript, which is not found in the Vatican codex. This presents Iakobos standing and then prostrate before John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nyssa, who are seated before a copy of the Gospel of Matthew and the Song of Songs respectively (fig. 1). According to Linardou, this is not a straightforward author portrait, but rather a *ktetor* image, which presents Iakobos as the manuscript's commissioner and comments on his literary sources and aspirations by connecting him to specific biblical texts and their patristic commentators.<sup>145</sup>

To this I would like to add a piece of evidence that might also suggest the Paris copy was produced for Iakobos: the visitation miniature, which narrates the meeting between Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, and Mary according to Luke 1:39–55 and the *Protevangelion* 12:2–7, is depicted in both manuscripts with the same components, but in a different order. In the Vatican codex (fig. 28), Zachariah and a maid appear on the left, more maids witness the kiss between Mary and Elizabeth, and on the right stands James (Greek Iakobos), Joseph's younger son, future apostle, and Christ's brother. According to tradition, James was the author of the *Protevangelion*, and he appears as Mary's constant companion in several Kokkinobaphos miniatures (cf. figs. 19, 25). In the Paris copy the young boy is in the middle of the visitation (fig. 29). Since the same number of participants is depicted in both codices, this rearrangement cannot be because the much

smaller dimensions of the Paris copy left insufficient space.<sup>146</sup> I believe the intention was instead to give greater prominence to James, both because he was identified with the author of the *Protevangelion* (the main source of the Kokkinobaphos homilies) and because Iakobos was James's namesake. In the Kokkinobaphos miniatures the young James is represented as an eyewitness to all the major events in Mary's life from the moment she is entrusted to Joseph; indeed, the young boy functions as her guardian, and therefore guarantor of her purity, before and after the conception of Christ (compare figs. 19 and 25).<sup>147</sup> The visitation is of particular importance among the events witnessed by James, because through the reaction of the baby leaping in her womb, Elizabeth was inspired to recognize Mary as the mother of the Savior (Luke 1:41–45). And since the visitation is reported both in the Gospels (Luke 1:39–55) and in the *Protevangelion* (12:2–7), the prominence of James as an eyewitness in the visual representation of this event further highlights his authority as a source. Indeed, the recurring depiction of James as eyewitness in several miniatures underlines the reliability of both the *Protevangelion* and the Kokkinobaphos homilies. In addition the homonymy between James/Iakobos the apostle and Iakobos of Kokkinobaphos helps to present the former as a metonym of the latter, suggesting that the monk is a worthy successor of the apostle in his faithful narration of Mary's life. This elevates the prestige of both the Kokkinobaphos author and his literary production. So if the Paris copy was produced for Iakobos the monk, it was particularly significant for him to have Iakobos the apostle placed at the center of the visitation episode, as if to suggest that through this biblical figure the Byzantine author,

146 This is the suggestion put forward by Linardou, "Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited," 406.

147 Figure 19 represents the moment Gabriel arrives in Nazareth but does not yet reveal himself to Mary. In the same composition James looks upon the Virgin behind a veil, which suggests that he was constantly around, safeguarding her purity (while the motif of the lifted veil also has the added symbolism of a visionary revelation, underlining the significance of what is about to transpire in the annunciation). James cannot appear witnessing the dialogue between the Virgin and Gabriel depicted in the following Kokkinobaphos miniatures (e.g., figs. 20, 22), as that would be against the Gospel narrative that presents her alone at the moment of the angelic salutation (Luke 1:26–38). But his presence in the miniatures before and after gives proof of his reliability as a narrator and guarantor of her virginity.

144 Ibid., 390–92. In the same publication Linardou proves beyond doubt that the Vatican Kokkinobaphos was the first to be produced, and the Paris manuscript was an abridged copy, smaller in dimensions and with slightly fewer miniatures.

145 Ibid., 387–90. See also Anderson, "Illustrated Sermons" (n. 2 above), 72–73, where it is astutely observed that the two saints are represented in monastic attire, further connecting them to Iakobos.



and by extension his readers, also become eyewitnesses to this important event in the incarnation miracle. This idea is underlined by another iconographic detail in both the Vatican and the Paris codices: in three miniatures in which James is depicted accompanying Mary as she travels to, arrives at, and departs from Elizabeth's house, the future author of the *Protevangelion* appears closer to the lower red border of the composition than any other person (cf. figs. 28–29).<sup>148</sup> This is a rare detail in the Kokkinobaphos cycle.<sup>149</sup> The intention might have been to present St. James as the intermediary between the worlds of the viewer and the viewed, and to suggest a parallel with Iakobos, who by authoring the homilies became the mediator between the readers and the protagonists of the narrative.

Although the Paris codex is considerably smaller than the Vatican codex and its miniature cycle has been abbreviated by a few scenes,<sup>150</sup> it is still a very expensive manuscript. Unfortunately we cannot know for sure if Iakobos or Eirene bore its cost; and we can only hypothesize that the author shared his creation with his brethren,<sup>151</sup> all of whom might have been expected to pray for the salvation of the wealthy benefactress, if she indeed provided their monastery with this devotional treasure. What we can explore with greater confidence are the cultural and social ramifications of the central protagonist of the codices: the Theotokos, not simply as the Mother of God, but also as a model of pious behavior for all Christians, but especially for women. In both the text and images of the Kokkinobaphos homilies Mary was given an important role in the construction of female identity, especially through the themes of motherhood and textile production. I will now turn to issues of gender dynamics, taking into consideration that both manuscripts were produced by men, but that the first had a female patron and user, while

the second probably had male users and possibly a male commissioner. Therefore, I will not only examine the significance of motherhood and textile production for Eirene, but will discuss subtle differences in the illustration of the two manuscripts that could further illuminate the divergent interests and perceptions of a female versus male audience. I will begin by considering the importance of textile production for female identity in Byzantium, including some evidence concerning the sebastokratorissa.

### Textiles, Byzantine Women, and the Sebastokratorissa Eirene

Since antiquity, spinning and weaving were second only to childbearing as quintessential female occupations. They denoted women's virtue, industriousness, and obedience in the seclusion of the domestic sphere.<sup>152</sup> The multivalent meanings of textile production operating in the Greco-Roman and Jewish traditions converged and were further enriched in the Christian tradition. As discussed above, a major component in the theme of symbolic textiles in Christian culture was the clothing metaphors used to describe the incarnation as the weaving of the purple mantle of human flesh, prepared inside Mary's womb in order to dress the Logos. Consistent with this tradition, the Kokkinobaphos homilies place an unprecedented emphasis on images of fleece, wool, thread, and veil as symbols of the incarnation. This unique concentration of references to the purple mantle of the incarnation created by Mary could further corroborate the hypothesis that Eirene, a purple-dressed woman interested in textile production, commissioned the two manuscripts (or at least the Vatican codex). The imperial purple was the most expensive dye in the Byzantine textile industry. The trade of purple-dyed textiles was an imperial monopoly, as was the use of purple clothes. Only the emperor had the privilege to be dressed entirely in purple (including his shoes) and sign in purple ink, while other members of the imperial family or high officials could wear the

148 Vat. gr. 1162, fols. 114v, 149r, 161v (Stornajolo, *Omélie di Giacomo monaco*, pls. 63, 65, 68); Paris. gr. 1208, fols. 189v (walking to the temple, before the trip to Elizabeth's home), 203r (visitation) (Omout, *Homélies du moine Jacques*, pls. XXIV–XXV) (both n. 1 above). Today the Paris copy is lacking folios on which the departure from Elizabeth's house, equivalent to Vat. gr. 161v, might have been depicted (for which see Linardou, "Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited," 403).

149 For a brief discussion of a few more exceptions that might carry a significant meaning, see below, 319, and n. 291.

150 Linardou, "Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited," 403–5.

151 As suggested by Linardou, *ibid.*, 397.

152 See Wayland-Barber, *Women's Work* (n. 75 above), esp. 101–26, with reference to traditions of the Minoan and Mycenaean world and the Homeric epics that survived well into the medieval period. Also S. Gualerzi, *Penelope, o della tessitura: Trame femminili da Omero a Ovidio* (Bari, 2007), for the importance of textile production for female identity in the ancient Greek and Roman world.

color on only some of their garments.<sup>153</sup> It is certain that Eirene was among them.<sup>154</sup> So for her, the purple wool in Mary's hands was not just a symbol of the incarnation but also a reference to Eirene's privileged status, which related her royal family to the king and queen of heaven. Furthermore, spinning and weaving were activities in which Eirene was probably personally involved.<sup>155</sup> In Byzantium even princesses and empresses were expected to spin and weave and those who did not were criticized, either implicitly or explicitly.<sup>156</sup>

There is evidence to suggest that Eirene specifically created textiles for dedication to famous Marian icons in Constantinople. Vassiliki Dimitropoulou's Ph.D. dissertation on the patronage of Komnenian women discusses twenty-seven surviving epigrams that commemorate their religious donations of various objects.<sup>157</sup> Thirteen of these were donations of veils, seven of which were made by Eirene, two by her daughter Maria, and one by her daughter-in-law Maria Doukaina. The remaining three were made by three different

Komnenian princesses.<sup>158</sup> In other words, according to the surviving evidence, among imperial women Eirene and members of her family almost monopolized the dedication of expensive veils. The remaining fourteen epigrams refer to offerings of crosses, icons, and other religious objects favored by Komnenian women as devotional gifts. Only two of these fourteen epigrams commemorate donations by Eirene and her daughter Maria,<sup>159</sup> proving that the sebastokratorissa and her household clearly favored veil donations. In addition, three of the veil epigrams indicate that Eirene and her daughter-in-law did not simply pay for the production of the textiles, but decorated or wove them personally.<sup>160</sup>

In general, Byzantine epigrams referring to precious donations state that the objects were made by the donors. The rather ambiguous phrasing does not permit us to determine whether this means they literally made the objects themselves. The implication is usually that the donors paid for the production of the object. This must be the case, for example, with icons or metal objects, since we have no evidence of aristocratic men or women actually making such objects themselves. In the case of textiles dedicated by women the issue is complicated, since we know that even aristocratic women were expected to spin and weave. Were they skilled enough to produce precious veils decorated with gold threads and pearls, as described in some of the epigrams? It is possible that such embroidery was practiced by aristocratic women. In fact, Dimitropoulou observes that three of the thirteen epigrams referring to female Komnenian dedications of veils describe the textiles not simply as "made," but as specifically "decorated" or "woven," indicating they were produced by the donors themselves. Two of these are donations by Eirene, and

153 See the sources mentioned in n. 13 above.

154 As a sebastokratorissa and wife of the purple-born sebastokrator Andronikos, Eirene was also called βασιλίσσα (queen), like the purple-born daughters of the emperors. Both Iakobos and other writers address her by saying "your royalty," ἡ βασιλεία σου. In other words, she was not purple-born by birth, but certainly had the status and privileges of a purple-born by marriage. See Varzos, *Γενεαλογία τῶν Κομνηνῶν* (n. 2 above), 365. See also O. Lampsidis, "Zur Sebastokratorissa Eirene," *JÖB* 34 (1984): 91–105, esp. 100–101.

155 The importance of spinning and weaving in the life of Byzantine women is treated in Koukoules, *Βυζαντινῶν βίος καὶ πολιτισμὸς* (n. 121 above), 2:12–16, 202–5; Constan, "Weaving the Body of God," 185–88, and idem, *Proclus of Constantinople*, 343–45, with further literature (both n. 5 above); Nardi, *Né sole né luna* (n. 121 above) 43–45; and M. F. Heintz, "Work: The Art and Craft of Earning a Living," in Kalavrezou, *Byzantine Women* (n. 5 above), 140–41.

156 See Nardi, *Né sole né luna* (n. 121 above), 43. Constan, *Proclus of Constantinople*, 343–47, esp. 349, with special reference to the fifth-century empress Pulcheria and her sisters, who according to the historian Sozomenos were constantly occupied with weaving and embroidery. In the eleventh century, Psellos considered it unusual that the empress Zoe was not occupied with spinning and weaving, but with the production of perfumes; see *Chronographia* 6.64, ed. É. Renauld, *Michel Psellos, Chronographie, ou Histoire d'un siècle de Byzance (976–1077)*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1967), 148.

157 V. Dimitropoulou, "Komnenian Imperial Women as Patrons of Art and Architecture" (Ph.D. diss., University of Sussex, 2004). I am very grateful to Dr. Dimitropoulou for sharing a copy of her thesis with me.

158 Ibid., 172–84. The epigrams are included in the appendix at 253–69. The ones referring to Eirene sebastokratorissa and the women of her family are published by E. Miller, "Poésies inédites de Théodore Prodrome," *Annuaire de l'association pour l'encouragement des études grecques en France* 17 (1883): 33–40; idem, *Recueil des historiens des croisades: Historiens grecs* (Paris, 1975–81), 2:692; and in the Codex Marcianus 524, S. P. Lampros, "Ὁ Μαρκετιανὸς Κῶδιξ 524," *Νέος Ἑλλ.* 8 (1911): 35–36, no. 70.

159 Dimitropoulou, "Komnenian Imperial Women," 185–98.

160 For this issue and the relevant comments made in the following paragraph see ibid., 172–84. The tent poems mentioned above (n. 128) also suggest Eirene's special interest in textiles and their multivalent symbolism.



the third is a donation by her daughter-in-law.<sup>161</sup> In addition, the epigrams of the donations made by Eirene's daughter and daughter-in-law refer to purple as both the color of the veils and the color that denotes the imperial connections of their family. The epigrams of Eirene's donations make only the latter reference and do not specify if purple thread was also a basic material of the veils themselves, although this is plausible.<sup>162</sup> If it was, the viewer would have seen the purple of the veils and been reminded by the epigram embroidered on it that this color denoted the status of the imperial donor.

According to the epigrams, these veils were offered to protect Marian images in exchange for protection offered by the Theotokos to Eirene and her family. The two Kokkinobaphos manuscripts (or at least the Vatican codex) can be seen as similar commissions: precious objects that prove Eirene's devotion to Mary and present the Virgin as a model for her, similarly occupied in the study of scriptures and the production of textiles: the sebastokratorissa emulates Mary in exchange for divine protection and salvation.<sup>163</sup> At this point it is time to investigate the gender dynamics of the Kokkinobaphos project in the broader context of Byzantine culture and consider how the original audience of the manuscripts might have perceived the models of female virtue exemplified by Mary and her textile production. The evidence and analysis presented in what follows will indicate that different interpretations of the same material were possible, promoting a more empowering or a more repressive construction of femininity, depending on context, circumstances, and the viewpoint and identity of individual readers.

### Mary and Female Identity in Byzantium

Since the Theotokos was a fundamental social construct of the patriarchal society of Byzantium, one wonders if the connection proposed between the sebastokratorissa and the Mother of God would have promoted Eirene's empowerment, or her subordination to the restrictive and at times explicitly misogynistic gender ideals of her culture. In my opinion Mary's identity promotes both exaltation and suppression of female potential, and

exactly this contradiction mutually reinforces both aspects of her function as a role model: by sanctifying obedience and seclusion she promotes female subordination, but at the same time she enhances the possibility that women might claim prestige within their traditional roles by imitating such an honorable model. This is not a paradox, but an example of the ubiquity of contradictions in life, individual personalities, and their collective societies.<sup>164</sup>

The prominent theme of textile production is most revealing: Mary weaves the body of Christ in order to restore humanity to its original glory, destroyed by the disobedience of Eve, who brought shame into the world and condemned her daughters to work all their lives in order to clothe the nakedness of humankind. From this perspective Mary does not only offer a new model of dignity for women who are constantly occupied with weaving; as an exemplary obedient housewife, she also validates and promotes female seclusion through her involvement in textile production, exactly because she gives this tedious occupation a special status as women's dignified duty. As the polar opposite of Eve and an absolutely exceptional being, the virginal Mother of God reinforces the condemnation of women and reminds them of their debt to men. Paradoxically, she also proves that female nature can rise to extraordinary heights and become more venerable than all creation through motherhood, which made possible the incarnation and hence human salvation. Eve herself is part of this vital contradiction, because although her disobedience caused the loss of paradise, it also caused the glorification of humanity through Mary and her son.

161 Ibid., 176–83.

162 See the appendix with the epigrams in *ibid.*, 253–69.

163 Discussed extensively in Evangelatou, "Pursuing Salvation" (n. 129 above).

164 See the insightful comments on this issue by C. Bynum, "Why Paradox? The Contradictions of My Life as a Scholar," *Catholic Historical Review* 98, no. 3 (2012): 433–55. I thank Caroline Bynum for sharing this inspiring article with me. For a nuanced analysis of the contradictions inherent in Mary as a model of womanhood in the patriarchal establishment of the Christian church and for a feminist critique of the sexist construction of gender promoted through the ideal of the Virgin in Catholicism see M. Hamington, *Hail Mary? The Struggle for Ultimate Womanhood in Catholicism* (New York, 1995). A recent publication on Byzantine gender that explores polyvalence, diversity, and change within the framework of traditional sociocultural values in the construction of womanhood in Byzantium is *Questions of Gender in Byzantine Society*, ed. B. Neil and L. Garland (Burlington, 2013). Focusing specifically on Mary is chapter five by S. Gador-Whyte, "Changing Conceptions of Mary in Sixth-Century Byzantium: The Kontakia of Romanos the Melodist," 77–92.

Without Eve's sin there would be no need for Mary's virtue or the miracle of the incarnation that made a human woman the Mother of God and turned a divine judge into a compassionate healer, who suffered directly the pains of humanity and glorified human nature as never before by interweaving his divinity with it. Christ the new Adam is not just a restored Adam but a divine Adam; and he was born not simply from a new Eve, but from a daughter of Eve who acquired honor that her foremother could never have imagined in her original state of grace before the fall. Although I am not aware of a Byzantine text that presents Eve's sin in this positive light, it is in complete agreement with the main tenet of Byzantine theology that the incarnation through Mary led to the glorification of human nature, not only through Christ, who dressed his divinity in humanity, but also through Mary, who was worthy of being his mother.<sup>165</sup> A few surviving hymns written by women, especially the ninth-century nuns Kassia and Thekla, clearly depart from the misogyny of many male authors who blame Eve for every possible evil and misfortune of humankind. In the eyes of these female hymnographers, Eve was punished for one sin committed at the dawn of time (and in the context of human frailty her lack of judgment was by no means exceptional); yet through the incarnation Mary not only reversed Eve's curse and honored female nature beyond comparison, she also elevated it to an exceptional status, higher than the state of grace before the fall.<sup>166</sup>

165 The most representative example is of course the Akathistos Hymn which praises Mary as the salvatrix: through her not only are Adam and Eve forgiven, but God is made available to all, the whole creation is renewed, and human nature is glorified. For Greek text, English translation, and commentary see Peltomaa, *Mary in the Akathistos Hymn* (n. 62 above).

166 See E. Catafygiotou-Topping, "Thekla the Nun: In Praise of Woman," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 25 (1980): 353–70; A. M. Silvas, "Kassia the Nun c. 810–c. 865: An Appreciation," in *Byzantine Women: Varieties of Experience 800–1200*, ed. L. Garland (Aldershot, 2006), 17–39. For an overview of negative and oppressive as well as positive and empowering perceptions of womanhood in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, including biblical and patristic references and saints' lives, see the paper presented by E. Catafygiotou-Topping to the Patriarch Athenagoras Orthodox Institute at the Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley in 1989, available online at <http://members.iinet.net.au/~mmjournal/MaryMartha/THEOLOGICAL%20REFLECTIONS%20Orthodox%20Eve.html> (accessed 14 October 2014). A very insightful analysis of the presentation of Eve as the quintessential evil female and antitype of Mary in Christian textual and visual production is offered by P. Howell Jolly, *Made in*

Kassia and Thekla applied Mary's qualities to female nature as a whole, while male authors and ecclesiastical authorities tended to do the opposite, emphasizing that the Virgin is unique and an unapproachable ideal for the daughters of Eve. For example, in the first Kokkinobaphos homily, Anna's decision to dedicate a female child to the Jewish temple is highlighted as a daring novelty that is justified by Mary's exceptional character. The implication is that only male children are an appropriate dedication, since females are lacking in purity. Indeed the author exclaims that nowhere in holy scripture is a female child offered to God, and especially to the temple, to live among the officiating priests. Anna disregards this custom when she vows that in exchange for the gift of fertility she will dedicate her child, even if it is female. The author justifies this audacious infringement of tradition on the basis of Anna's extreme love for God, reading it as a prophecy of the true novelty, Mary's exceptional nature. For "she alone from female nature, the only beginning of humanity, was ever promised and given to God as an exceptionally precious offering."<sup>167</sup> Here the author juxtaposes the extraordinary purity of the Virgin to the ordinary condition of other women, who are considered inferior to men.

*God's Image? Eve and Adam in the Genesis Mosaics at San Marco, Venice* (Berkeley, 1997), esp. 28–76. For an alternative reading of this mosaic, focusing in particular on the relationship between the foremother and the Mother of God and suggesting that Eve is honored as the woman who prepared the path for the arrival of Mary, see A. Reed, "Blessing the Serpent and Treading on Its Head: Marian Typology in the S. Marco Creation Cupola," *Gesta* 46, no. 1 (2007): 41–58, esp. 45–52. On p. 54 (n. 39) Reed states: "To be sure, medieval depictions of Eve strike modern sensibilities as misogynistic. With further analysis and more concerted efforts at historical and cultural contextualization, however, we find that these images are complex, ambivalent, and sometimes even sympathetic." Reed mentions further literature on the possible positive reading of Eve as a prefiguration of Mary in Western Medieval culture: B. Williamson, "The Virgin *Lactans* as Second Eve: Image of the Salvatrix," *Studies in Iconography* 19 (1998): 105–38; and H. Kraus, "Eve and Mary: Conflicting Images of Medieval Women," in *The Living Theater of Medieval Art* (Bloomington, 1967), 41–62, repr. in *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, ed. N. Broude and M. D. Garrard (New York, 1982), 79–99.

167 Homily 1.13, PG 127:564A. "καὶ τοι οὐκ ἂν ποὺ τῆς Γραφῆς κατανοηθεῖν ἐν ἐπαγγελίαις ἢ ἐν ἀφιερώσει, Θεῷ ἀνατιθέμενον θῆλυ, καὶ μάλιστα ἐν τῷ ναῷ τοῖς λειτουργοῖς συναριθμούμενον· ἀλλ' ὅμως ὑπερβολὴ φιλοθείας, αὐτὴ καινουργεῖ τοῦτο, ἐν ἐπαγγελίᾳ προφητεύουσα, τὴν ἔσεσθαι μέλλουσαν ἐν τῷ πράγματι καινοτομίαν. Μόνη γὰρ τῆς γυναικείας φύσεως, ἡ μόνη τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος ἀπαρχή, καὶ ὑπεσχήθη καὶ ὑπέρτιμον ἀπεδόθη Θεῷ ἀνάθημα."



Another striking example of the diametrically opposed Byzantine perceptions of Mary's role as a model of female identity comes from canon seventy-nine of the Council in Trullo that took place in Constantinople in 692. This canon condemns the introduction into the Christmas festivities of a popular custom for the celebration of a new birth: after a successful parturition a dish of sweet cereal mixture (*semidalis*) was offered to the new mother and the visitors celebrating the happy occasion. The canon forbids people to do this in honor of the Virgin on the day after Christmas since Mary, who conceived miraculously and had a painless delivery, was not a normal mother.<sup>168</sup> The canon does not specify whether women in particular had a role in introducing this custom, though this seems a plausible hypothesis.<sup>169</sup> That both men and women participated in the celebration suggests representatives of both sexes could appreciate Mary as a model of human motherhood and by extension attribute an exalted degree of dignity to female labor. The ecclesiastical authorities, on the other hand, were anxious to disassociate the Virgin from all other women, emphasizing through the prohibition of this custom that they were Eve's daughters rather than Mary's sisters. Indeed, the reference to Mary's uniquely painless parturition resonates with God's curse upon Eve, who was condemned after her fall to bear children in pain (Genesis 3:17). As Judith Herrin has observed, a number of canons from the Council in Trullo reveal a tendency to restrict and monitor female activities, both inside and outside the context of church rituals; to associate women with Jews and heretics; and to accuse them of inappropriate, corrupting behavior (that requires male control), or of simple-minded innocence (that leads them astray when proper male protection is lacking).<sup>170</sup> It is perhaps a byproduct of the intention of ecclesiastical authorities to distinguish Mary from ordinary women that the iconography of the Galaktotrophousa, the Virgin breast-feeding Christ, does not seem to have been particularly widespread in Byzantine visual production.<sup>171</sup>

168 J. Herrin, "Femina Byzantina: The Council in Trullo on Women," in *Unrivaled Influence, Women and Empire in Byzantium* (Princeton, 2013), 127.

169 Ibid.

170 Ibid., 115–32, esp. 127–28, and 115, for reference to commentaries that five hundred years after the Trullan Council still preserve the same attitudes toward women.

171 For an overview of breast-feeding in Byzantine visual culture, including the Galaktotrophousa, with extensive references

to scholarly literature, see M. Meyer, *An Obscure Portrait: Imaging Women's Reality in Byzantine Art* (London, 2008), 81–88. I thank Mati Meyer for generously offering me a copy of her book. The Galaktotrophousa seems to have been more popular in the Coptic tradition, possibly because the ecclesiastical establishment "appropriated" it as a symbol of the Eucharist. See E. S. Bolman, "The Enigmatic Coptic Galaktotrophousa and the Cult of the Virgin Mary in Egypt," in *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed. M. Vassilaki (Aldershot, 2005), 13–22. The ritual symbolism of the breast-feeding Mary in Coptic tradition does not exclude the possibility that female (and male) Copts saw it as a reference to the dignity and power of motherhood. Bolman suggests that breast-feeding was not connected with motherhood, at least in the culture of families that could afford a wet nurse, but I would imagine that the majority of women breast-fed their own children since they belonged to the poor strata of society from which the wealthier would hire wet nurses.

It is also important to consider that the Theotokos was venerated in Byzantium not only as the loving mother who suffered with her son and interceded with him on behalf of humanity, but also as the powerful militant protectress of the empire, its armies, and its people.<sup>172</sup> Byzantine women, in contrast, were encouraged to dedicate themselves to the traditional roles of obedient, caring, and loving mothers, wives, and daughters: usually they would gain recognition only for complying with the limitations of secluded family life, defining their identity through the men they served.<sup>173</sup> Certainly they were not allowed Mary's dynamic interventions into public life. For example, no woman, even an empress, could participate in the army, even though Mary was hailed as the general who fought in the first line of battle and secured victory in war. We might assume that this striking contrast between the Virgin's extraordinary potential and women's limited options would have emphasized female subordination, but it is also true that individual members of this society could have processed these tensions in ways that allowed for more empowering interpretations. For instance, Mary's militant activity could be seen as an example of bravery and courage, inspiring women to stand up to the challenges of their personal lives, even if they were only domestic. In the case of elite women who had access to powerful men and were occasionally allowed a more active participation in public life, like the three

to scholarly literature, see M. Meyer, *An Obscure Portrait: Imaging Women's Reality in Byzantine Art* (London, 2008), 81–88. I thank Mati Meyer for generously offering me a copy of her book. The Galaktotrophousa seems to have been more popular in the Coptic tradition, possibly because the ecclesiastical establishment "appropriated" it as a symbol of the Eucharist. See E. S. Bolman, "The Enigmatic Coptic Galaktotrophousa and the Cult of the Virgin Mary in Egypt," in *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium*, ed. M. Vassilaki (Aldershot, 2005), 13–22. The ritual symbolism of the breast-feeding Mary in Coptic tradition does not exclude the possibility that female (and male) Copts saw it as a reference to the dignity and power of motherhood. Bolman suggests that breast-feeding was not connected with motherhood, at least in the culture of families that could afford a wet nurse, but I would imagine that the majority of women breast-fed their own children since they belonged to the poor strata of society from which the wealthier would hire wet nurses.

172 B. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, 2006), 61–107. See also eadem, "The Virgin of Constantinople: Power and Belief," in Kalavrezou, *Byzantine Women* (n. 5 above), 113–19, esp. 113.

173 Herrin, "Council in Trullo on Women," 128.

generations of Komnenian female protagonists in the *Alexiad* (Anna Dalassene, Eirene Doukaina, and Anna Komnene), Mary's role as leader of the army and indefatigable fighter might have reinforced their determination. In any case, we should bear in mind that against the actual social and cultural limitations that molded Byzantine women's life experiences, Mary's multifaceted powers did not create an unambiguous path to female empowerment, but rather generated tensions that complicated the construction of female identities, often promoting rather than challenging the subordination of women expounded by the male-dominated establishment.

An analogous case is the six main Olympian goddesses of the ancient Greek pantheon, as presented in the predominantly male-authored textual and visual production that survives. None functioned as a straightforward positive and empowering model for real Greek women, who were required to act as faithful and obedient wives, mothers, and daughters, and were expected to marry and produce successful male heirs.<sup>174</sup> One wonders whether any ancient Greek women developed their own oral tradition to promote a more positive identity and mythology about their

goddesses.<sup>175</sup> However, a major advantage they enjoyed in comparison to Byzantine women (besides the belief in the divine feminine, absent in Christian dogma) was a much more active role in public worship, since they could earn prestige and influence as priestesses.<sup>176</sup> On the contrary, ecclesiastical authorities increasingly restricted the participation of women in Christian ceremony, banning them from the priesthood and ministry in the early period and eventually requiring them to be a totally silent audience during church services: by the seventh century, canon seventy of the Council in Trullo entirely prohibited women from speaking during services, denying them even vocal participation in communal prayers.<sup>177</sup> In addition, as Herrin observes, the identity of many Byzantine female saints was centered on charity, promoting the role of motherly caretaker and nurturer, while a much greater variety of roles was open to male saints.<sup>178</sup>

Returning to the consideration of the Theotokos as a female model, we may wonder if the Byzantines would have perceived the contradictions that we do in Mary's role as an exemplary woman who can promote both empowerment and subordination. Byzantine literature on the incarnation, indebted to the ancient rhetorical category of antithesis, thrives on the interplay of contradictions.<sup>179</sup> For example, the Theotokos

174 For example, Hera was the goddess of marriage and queen of heaven, but her own marriage was rather unhappy. Her husband betrayed her constantly and his children by other women were far more powerful and honored than her own: Hera gave birth to two male Olympians (Ares, feared and hated god of war, and Hephaestus, the ugly and lame ironsmith and patron of the working classes) and two female minor goddesses (Eileithyia, protectress of childbirth, and Hebe, connected to youth and marriage). By comparison, Leto gave birth to the powerful Olympians Apollo and Artemis (to mention just one case of prominent divine offspring sired by Zeus with other women). The other Olympian goddesses were even more inappropriate as models for the ideal Greek wife and mother: they were either husbandless mothers (such as Demeter, whose only daughter was the fruit of her rape by her brother Zeus); promiscuous and irresponsible lovers (Aphrodite); or virgins (Athena, Artemis, Hestia). Their characters and actions problematized female nature in various ways, thus promoting the condemnation of women as dangerous and inferior beings. For basic information on the personalities and specialties of Greek goddesses, including the ones mentioned here, see, for example, B. Powell, *Classical Myth* (Upper Saddle River, 2001), 144–47, 192–215. The issue of gender constructs in ancient Greek myths is prominent in scholarship and far beyond the scope of the present article. For a useful overview with references to further readings see V. Zajko, “Women and Greek Myth,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology*, ed. R. D. Woodard (Cambridge, 2007), 387–406.

175 For example, consider the possible existence of an alternative myth concerning Pandora, discussed by J. M. Hurwit, “Beautiful Evil: Pandora and the Athena Parthenos,” *AJA* 99 (1995): 171–86, esp. 176–77. Hurwit uses visual evidence from Athenian pots and modern scholarship on the etymology of the name Pandora to suggest that this mythical woman might have had an alternative identity as a chthonic goddess who provides the gifts of the earth (therefore a positive female figure). On the contrary, the widely known misogynistic narratives in Hesiod present her as the first human female, who received gifts from all the gods in order to become the irresistible seductress who brought misery to the world. The evidence for the alternative version is scarce and, as Hurwit observes, we are not able to judge whether the chthonic divine Pandora is a different telling of the same myth, or a different Pandora altogether. It is possible to imagine that an oral tradition about this alternative Pandora might have circulated among women, but this remains hypothetical.

176 See J. B. Connelly, *Portrait of a Priestess: Women and Ritual in Ancient Greece* (Princeton, 2007).

177 See Herrin, “Council in Trullo on Women” (n. 168 above), 120.

178 Ibid.

179 Maguire, *Art and Eloquence* (n. 111 above), 53–83. See also Cross, “St Mary in the Christian East” (n. 5 above), for influential hymns of the Eastern Orthodox tradition authored by men (such as the Akathistos and the works by Romanos the Melodist) that



contains the uncontainable and she is wider than heaven, for the creator of the universe took his residence in her and rose like the sun of justice from her womb. In the case of the miracle of the incarnation, these contradictions are far more than simple gestures of literary elegance; they operate at the core of the mystery and theology of salvation that unites human and divine in the person of Christ. However, the contradictions with respect to the construction of gender identity in the surviving record of Byzantium are more elusive, because they exist at a subtextual level and were generated by individual personal responses to social and cultural values. To what extent and how were Byzantine men and women conscious or unconscious products and producers of such values, in their lives and in the textual and visual record they left behind? Here evidence of specific gender dynamics is even more elusive, because most of the material was produced by men, and even when women attempted to find and record their own voices, they were not just discouraged, but to a large extent conditioned to express themselves according to the restrictions and values of their male-dominated society.<sup>180</sup> Some women might have tried to find personal validation by complying with the norms and others by challenging them, but there is scarce direct evidence.

Yet the evidence that does exist suggests some women not only were aware of the unjust limitations imposed on them but were certain of their own potential and value, and understood how their achievements in the face of adversity could be additional proof of their worth, both as women and as human beings. This seems to be the spirit of Anna Komnene's comments about her paternal grandmother, who achieved honor and power not just as the influential mother,

present Mary as the one who honored human nature beyond comparison and was loved by God more than any other part of his creation (precisely because she became the mother of the Logos who had to come to earth to absolve the original sin of Eve).

180 See, for example, the comments by B. Hill, *Imperial Women in Byzantium 1025–1204: Power, Patronage and Ideology* (New York, 1999), 6–8, 10–14. In the chapter “Towards a Feminist History of Byzantium,” 18–28, Hill makes further comments on this issue, including the difficulty of studying the social and cultural ideas operative for and experienced by historical people without being sidetracked by one's contemporary perceptions. See also B. Neil, “An Introduction to Questions of Gender in Byzantium,” in Niel and Garland, *Questions of Gender* (n. 164 above), 1–10, esp. 3–7, the section on methodological issues.

but also as the dynamic co-regent of her imperial son Alexios.<sup>181</sup> Anna's *Alexiad* has long been recognized by scholars as a unique case of female-authored autobiography and an epic imperial history that speaks clearly about both the proud self-perception and bitter disillusion of this ambitious Byzantine princess. As her own words betray, Anna was painfully aware that her failure to claim imperial power for herself was due not to personal shortcomings, but to the prejudicial cultural restrictions applied to her gender.<sup>182</sup>

Another valuable insight into assertive female self-perception is the literary production of the nuns Kassia and Thekla. Only one hymn by Thekla dedicated to the Theotokos has been preserved, yet its pride in the dignity of Mary and of female nature in the service of virtue and the Church is crystal clear.<sup>183</sup> More material has survived from Kassia, who fiercely declared the resilience of women and saw them sharing in Mary's constancy of virtue rather than Eve's momentary lapse of judgment.<sup>184</sup>

These rare survivals of evidence nevertheless demonstrate that at least some Byzantine women with access to wealth and education not only challenged dominant male prejudices against female nature but strove to leave a record of their struggle. How many more negotiated alternative, empowering perceptions, experiences, and expressions of femininity in their daily lives we will never know. The Kokkinobaphos homilies are an intriguing case because they offer elusive evidence for the construction of gender. They were made by men to honor a woman of exceptional prestige (Mary), and at least one of them was destined for use by another woman (Eirene), who in terms of wealth and social standing was far more powerful than the miniaturist or the author of the homilies. These factors render the gender dynamics of this production very complex, leaving them open to various interpretations, all of which could have been valid in the manuscript's original context based on differences in the gender, social status, and personal interests

181 T. Gouma-Peterson, “Gender and Power: Passages to the Maternal in Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*,” in *Anna Komnene and Her Times*, ed. eadem (New York, 2000), 107–24, esp. 116.

182 Ibid., with references to further literature.

183 Catafygiotu-Topping, “Thekla the Nun” (n. 166 above).

184 Silvas, “Kassia the Nun” (n. 166 above).

of its producers and users.<sup>185</sup> The following discussion of two Komnenian princesses with antithetical approaches to power further illuminates the dynamic and multidimensional construction and perception of gender in Byzantine culture.

### The Examples of Anna Komnene and Eirene Sebastokratorissa

It is reasonable to assume that the male producers of the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries might have perceived Mary's dedication to spinning as promoting female obedience and domestic seclusion, reinforcing "the proper place" of women by presenting it as an honorable status that the Virgin herself exalts through her example. Women like Anna Komnene, the talented author and headstrong princess who attempted to seize imperial power for herself and was punished by the male-dominated establishment of the empire, might have perceived the message of female subordination in Mary's spinning, but would have regarded it instead with disapproval. Indeed her male contemporaries probably objected to her preference for producing texts rather than textiles as much as she objected to their expectations that she hold a spindle rather than a pen. This tension is implicit in Tornikes' funerary eulogy for Anna, which mentions exactly such an exchange of instruments emblematic of female and male identity to describe Anna's literary endeavors, and praises her "manly" qualities. His statement seems to imply latent disapproval that she violated her female nature in order to excel in male activities.<sup>186</sup> Perhaps

it is not a coincidence that contrary to Eirene sebastokratorissa, there is no record that Anna Komnene donated veils or other objects to icons of Mary. Instead, surviving epigrams mention her dedication of two icons of Christ.<sup>187</sup> The random survival of evidence perhaps skews our perception, but it is also possible that this ambitious princess saw the king of heaven rather than his queen mother as the figure more consistent with her personal aspirations.<sup>188</sup> In addition, although Anna praises motherhood as honorable and empowering in the case of her paternal grandmother and her mother,<sup>189</sup> she does not present herself in the same role: she never mentions her four children in the *Alexiad*.<sup>190</sup> This makes perfect sense if we consider her personal ambitions for direct access to power and the fact that her offspring did not provide her with any political and social capital, since they did not hold any important public positions that could have made her influential as their mother. On the contrary, her grandmother had access to power through her imperial son, and her mother had it through her husband, and later attempted to enhance it by promoting her daughter rather than her son to the throne, which caused the downfall of both women.<sup>191</sup>

Contrary to Anna Komnene, Eirene sebastokratorissa did not aspire to be an autonomous contender for power, but to achieve it through the traditional

185 For some suggestions centered on the theme of female literacy and the use of books as presented in the Kokkinobaphos miniatures see Evangelatou, "Pursuing Salvation" (n. 129 above). On the subject of female literacy in Byzantium see A. R. Brown, "Psalmody and Socrates: Female Literacy in the Byzantine Empire," in Neil and Garland, *Questions of Gender* (n. 164 above), 57–76.

186 J. Darrouzès, *Georges et Démétrios Tornikès: Lettres et discours* (Paris, 1970), 315. Tornikes writes that Anna "exchanged the spindle and thread for the reed pen and book" and that she had "a male soul in a female body." He compares her to the *γυναικα ἀνδρείαν* of Proverbs 31:10, which means not just "valorous" but "manly" woman. In his eulogy he uses various words deriving from *ἀνήρ* or *ἄρρεν* (man, male) to characterize Anna. It has been noted that Anna was perceived as a paradox by contemporary men, who were uneasy with her exceptional learning and intellectual activities; see Nardi, *Né sole né luna* (n. 121 above), 52–55. Anna herself seems to have regretted that she was born a woman rather than a man, which gives us a

sense of the difficulties she faced because her interests and ambitions were not considered appropriate for women in Byzantium; see D. R. Reinsch, "Women's Literature in Byzantium? The Case of Anna Komnene," in Gouma-Peterson, *Anna Komnene and Her Times* (n. 181 above), 97–101.

187 Dimitropoulou, "Komnenian Imperial Women" (n. 157 above), 192, 264. As Dimitropoulou observes, the surviving evidence suggests that Anna herself wrote the epigrams accompanying the two icons, and it is possible that they were not public but private commissions, for her own use. Either way, they are indicative of Anna's personal interest in Christ rather than his mother as a powerful and empowering figure: although the epigrams refer to the incarnation and the passion, Mary is not mentioned at all. The focus is on Christ, who is without mother in heaven and without father on earth.

188 This in no way implies that Anna did not venerate Mary as well. It simply indicates that she might have preferred Christ to his mother as an empowering model.

189 Gouma-Peterson, "Gender and Power" (n. 181 above).

190 D. C. Smythe, "Middle Byzantine Family Values and Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*," in Garland, *Varieties of Experience* (n. 166 above), 126, 137.

191 Gouma-Peterson, "Gender and Power."



roles of wife and mother. Though she complied with the standard Byzantine expectations about the ideal female, as a prominent member of the court she also had more choices within her sociocultural limits, not unlike Mary.<sup>192</sup> Both women were defined through their relation to male authority figures: in the case of Eirene, her husband and sons; in the case of Mary, her son and God.<sup>193</sup> Through them they acquired special status within the patriarchal restrictions that defined their lives. As Meter Theou without a human husband, Mary offered Eirene a most useful model, especially after the death of her husband in 1142: she embodied access to power through motherhood.

### Female Commissioner and Male Producers

Eirene's aspirations were promoted in the Kokkinobaphos homilies through Mary's example, but they were textually and visually articulated through the intervention of the male author and illustrator. Although we cannot say to what extent Eirene was involved in the creation of these codices, it is clear that their producers responded to her personal interests. In this sense, even if we cannot prove Eirene's direct agency and involvement in the choice of specific iconographic themes, we may assume she still exerted an important influence, therefore asserting another kind of agency, perhaps indirect but still decisive: both the author and the miniaturist must have been aware of Eirene's appreciation of sacred textiles and possibly her direct personal involvement in textile production. As

192 After all, she was not forced to spin and weave for economic reasons, as most Byzantine women were, but she could choose to occupy herself in the production of precious textiles that, when dedicated to icons of Mary, would further promote Eirene's status in Byzantine society.

193 For example, the epigrams that accompanied the veil donations of Eirene and her daughters emphasize their dependence on male members of their families, even the dead ones: Eirene's status stems from her husband's position as *sebastokrator* and when he dies she is beset by trouble and in dire need of Mary's protection. One of her primary concerns is the well-being of her sons, the powerful members of her family who can ensure her own well-being. Her daughter and daughter-in-law also mention Eirene's husband as the source of their status and are primarily concerned with the protection of their husbands, who in turn will ensure their wives' well-being. Likewise in Byzantine culture and in the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts, Mary is praised as the mother of Christ and not as an independent divine figure.

a result, the homilies produced under her patronage elevate an established tradition of textile metaphors about the incarnation into a uniquely elaborate and emphatic presentation of Mary as the spinner and weaver of human salvation through the veil of flesh she prepares for the investiture of the Savior.

In the Kokkinobaphos project men were paid to serve a woman who exalted herself by association with the most obedient servant of all, the Mother of God. Due to her position and disposition, Eirene probably chose to identify with Mary as an empowering female symbol. On the contrary, the men who produced her luxurious homilies might have seen Mary as a model, or even an advocate, of female obedience. Yet even this idea would not necessarily have excluded a recognition of female power exercised through motherhood and industrious textile production—the two most important duties of a virtuous woman. Indeed, in the illustration of the codices the negative presentation of Eve is juxtaposed with the positive exaltation of Mary in ways that suggest the male producers, consciously or subconsciously, projected into the images their own perceptions of female gender identity, which were not necessarily in agreement with those of the female commissioner. Or perhaps they all looked approvingly at the same texts and images, but interpreted them in very different ways.

In the following pages I focus on a number of Kokkinobaphos miniatures in which biblical women are prominent. I base my interpretations on a careful visual analysis of the material in the context of central Byzantine cultural values about female identity. I use these images as case studies that illustrate how images can accommodate readings from various gender perspectives. At the same time, the emphasis of these miniatures on female protagonists, and especially on ideals of motherhood, further reinforces the hypothesis that a woman like Eirene *sebastokratorissa*, who presented herself as a dedicated mother, might indeed be the commissioner of the Kokkinobaphos project. I begin my analysis with Eve, the first biblical mother, whose sinister role in the fall of humankind to a large extent both reflected and defined the place of women in Christian societies like Byzantium. I move on to the more positive role models of Rebecca, Anna, and Elizabeth, and then to the more ambiguous representation of Mother Earth. I conclude with an analysis of the place of women in the *anastasis* compositions of the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts.

## Gender Construction in the Garden of Eden

A useful consideration in the investigation of shifting gender perceptions in the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries is Linardou's suggestion that the Paris codex was made for Iakobos, and only the Vatican manuscript was produced for Eirene. Linardou identifies an iconographic variation in the fall story that indicates the male producers of both codices emphasized Eve's blame only in the Vatican copy that was addressed to a woman:<sup>194</sup> the miniature of the expulsion from paradise in the sebastokratorissa's codex presents the Genesis episodes out of order, so that Eve's eating of the fruit appears in the center of the composition, while she tempts Adam in the top right, and they are reprimanded in the top left; they are finally expelled from paradise in the bottom right (fig. 7).<sup>195</sup> The miniature is followed by the part of the homily that includes Adam's lengthy accusations against Eve, showcasing her responsibility for the fall. In the Paris codex, in contrast, the episodes appear in their proper narrative sequence, and the miniature is situated in a part of the homily text that includes Adam's lamentations and recognition of his own responsibility in the fall. Linardou insightfully suggests that this difference proves the intention of the male producers to remind the female recipient of the Vatican codex that her sex is to blame for humanity's fall: "the prominent role of the sinner Eve in the Expulsion miniature of V [the Vatican codex] appears as intended to instruct the feminine viewer on what was perceived to be the 'cursed fate' of Eve's daughters i.e. women. The visual message does not simply echo gender-charged relations but in a vicious circle reproduces them and instructively promotes them as a visual reality intended for the eyes of a woman."<sup>196</sup>

It is indeed significant that such a forceful accusation against Eve is so prominent in a homiliary that exalts another female, Mary, in the highest terms possible. In a sense this emphasis on Eve's culpability seems intended to counterbalance Mary's incomparable

honor, while the sequence of the biblical narrative and the theology of salvation would suggest the emphasis should be just the opposite: how the curse of the foremother was reversed by the purity of the Theotokos. It seems that the male producers of the codex intended to present women as daughters of Eve instead of sisters of Mary in order to promote a sense of guilt and humility in the female reader, rather than pride and exalted dignity, and to remind her of the problematic status of her gender.<sup>197</sup> I would like to highlight one more detail that appears only in the Vatican miniature of the fall and likewise seems to serve the purpose of highlighting female culpability and the due subordination of women to men: when Eve offers the fruit to Adam, they are represented as two youths, identical except for the rendering of pectoral muscles and Eve's gesture (fig. 7, top right). But after Adam is led to sin, he appears older, with a beard that clearly distinguishes him from Eve, suggesting that the disobedience instigated by the first woman has introduced aging and death into human fate (fig. 7, top left). The curse of aging is even more prominent in the Lamentation miniature, where Adam appears at the top of the composition with a longer beard and hair and in the center with a grey beard and hair; Eve, in contrast, is still youthful, emphasizing how her act harmed the first man more than it did herself (fig. 10). Another way to interpret the introduction of this age difference immediately after the eating of the fruit is that it suggests Eve is no longer Adam's equal, but his junior partner, both in terms of age and agency. In other words, her moral inferiority and unworthiness have placed her under Adam's authority, in the same way that all women should be under the control of men in the male-dominated culture of Byzantium.

Other details of the Vatican miniature seem intended to emphasize the immaturity and mischief of Eve (and her daughters), further justifying their subordination to men. The standard Byzantine iconography of Genesis 3:8–13, seen for example in the Cappella Palatina mosaics (fig. 9) and the middle Byzantine Octateuchs, clearly visualizes the delegation of responsibility for the fall as presented in the Bible: Adam points toward Eve, who points toward

194 For the following see Linardou, "Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited" (n. 1 above), 390–92.

195 The miniature illustrates homily 2. Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 35r (Stornajolo, *Omélies di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 11); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 47r (Omout, *Homélies du moine Jacques*, pl. V). Hutter, "Die Homilien," 276–77; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 30–31 (all n. 1 above).

196 Linardou, "Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited," 392.

197 Compare how Eve appears dressed in exactly the same colors as Rebecca and Anna, suggesting a fundamental commonality between the foremother and her distant daughters. This point is discussed in more detail below, 314–15.



the serpent.<sup>198</sup> But in the Vatican Kokkinobaphos, Eve gestures toward Adam while he humbly holds his hands crossed in front of his chest (fig. 7, top left). This visual language seems to suggest that despite her obvious guilt (highlighted by the central display of her fall in the same miniature), the woman blames the man, who instead feels remorse for his own lack of judgment. Perhaps this detail was even intended to suggest that women are not just mischievous, but also immature, irresponsible, and incapable of grasping moral consequences. This is also reflected in Byzantine law, which punished women only in the case of adultery or murder, as if all other crimes were beyond their comprehension and accountability.<sup>199</sup> Precisely this attitude is emphatically showcased in the sixth homily of the Vatican Kokkinobaphos, when Joseph, suspecting Mary of unchastity, blames himself for not guarding her more closely to protect her from her own weakness, as Adam should have done with Eve: if he had not let her out of his sight, the serpent could not have led her astray.<sup>200</sup> This insidious reference to female immaturity and lack of moral strength is already present in the corresponding episode of the *Protevangelion*: there Joseph laments that his misfortune echoes the story of Adam, who left Eve alone “in his hour of praise,” allowing the serpent the opportunity to deceive her.<sup>201</sup>

These visual statements condemning women in the Vatican Kokkinobaphos do not appear in the Paris copy (fig. 8, center): no age difference is introduced

between Adam and Eve immediately after the fall (although there is one in the Lamentation miniature); and the gestures of the two sinners are identical, suggesting equal contrition, as they lower their heads, extend their left arms in supplication, and raise their right hands to their throats, perhaps to indicate remorse for eating the forbidden fruit. In addition, Adam is depicted seated when Eve gives him the fruit, which might suggest that he is her senior and that she should serve him and submit to his authority.<sup>202</sup> Instead her actions go against this duty, undermining his position.<sup>203</sup> At the same time, Adam’s lack of resistance to her influence highlights his own responsibility. It seems that in this miniature the issue is Adam and Eve’s shared culpability, which reflects the content of the second Kokkinobaphos homily, as well as the biblical narrative, where the man accepts the forbidden fruit from the woman without a second thought.<sup>204</sup> Their shared

202 Compare the hierarchy of seated and standing figures discussed below in connection with Jacob’s story: the sons are standing in front of their seated parents, but when Rebecca interacts with her husband, she is always standing while he is seated or lying down.

203 The idea that Eve should have been Adam’s subservient assistant, but instead caused him irreparable harm, is emphasized in the Kokkinobaphos second homily. Adam laments how his own “member” (a reference to the creation of Eve out of his rib) became a lethal arrow (wordplay between μέλος and βέλος), and by abandoning her own head (her husband, as specified in Ephesians 5:22–24), she was led astray with disastrous results. The issue of hierarchy is further elaborated through reference to animals, which were supposed to be ruled by humans, rather than rule them (as the serpent did through its influence on Eve). The reference is to animals being created as Adam’s helpers and named by him, before Eve was created as a helper of his own kind and was also named by him as “woman.” Although in Genesis Adam professed his union with her in one flesh, the context of Eve’s creation produced a striking analogy between her and the animals (see Genesis 2:18–25). Homily 2.9, PG 127:580D: “ἦν βοηθὸν ἐδεξάμην, ταύτην ἐπίβουλον εὖρον· ἦν συνεργὸν ἡλιζὸν ἐν τοῖς καλοῖς, ταύτην τῶν ἐναντίων πρόξενον κατανοῶ. Τὸ ἐμὸν μέλος, ἀναιρετικὸν βέλος. Ἡ εἰς βοήθειαν συνεζευγμένη, συνωθεῖν ἐμελέτησας. Τί γὰρ τῷ ὄφει ἐπίθου; τί δὲ τὴν σὴν ἐγκαταλείψασα κεφαλὴν, περιήγες πλανωμένη, καὶ τὸν ὀλεθρον ἐπεισάγουσα; διατὶ τῇ τῶν ὑποχειρίων ὑπείξας συμβουλῇ; Ἄρχειν τούτων ἐτέθημεν, μὴ ἀρχεσθαι ὑπ’ αὐτῶν προσετάγημεν· βασιλεύειν αὐτῶν· μὴ γὰρ βασιλεύεσθαι ὑπ’ αὐτῶν.”

204 In Genesis 3:1–6 Eve disputes the consumption of the forbidden fruit with the serpent before she is persuaded to eat it (she mentions God’s prohibition); on the contrary, Adam does not raise any objection: he simply accepts what Eve offers him. Christian authors developed the tradition of Adam resisting her suggestion before being persuaded. Although totally unsupported by the biblical narrative, this claim entered the illustration of the middle Byzantine Octateuchs, reinforcing visually the notion of Eve’s culpability and

198 See K. Weitzmann and M. Bernabò, *The Illustrations in the Manuscripts of the Septuagint*, vol. 2, *The Byzantine Octateuchs*, 2 parts (Princeton, 1999), 1:37–38, 2: figs. 91–94.

199 Hill, *Imperial Women in Byzantium* (n. 180 above), 16.

200 Vat. gr. 1162, folios 167r–v. Ἐγὼ ὑπαίτιος τοῦ ὑφορωμένου νῦν ἀτοπήματος, ἐγὼ τῆς ἐμῆς πρόξενος ζημίας. Εἰ γὰρ διαπαντὸς τῇ τηρουμένη συνώκουν, οὐκ ἂν τὴν διηνεκῇ κατάραν ἐκκληρώσαμην. Εἰ μὴ τὴν παρακαταθήκην ἔασας εἰς ἀνοήτους ἐστελλόμεν ἀποδημίας, οὐκ ἂν στεναγμοὶ τὴν ἐπιδημίαν διεδέξαντο . . . Παραπλησίως τοῖς τοῦ προπάτορος Ἀδάμ περιεπάρην κακοῖς· κάκεινος γὰρ εἰ μὴ τῆς δεδομένης διέστη βοηθοῦ, οὐκ ἂν συνεζεύχθη τῷ τῆς ἀράς ἐπιτιμῷ, οὐκ ἂν ἀμφοτέροι ταῖς τοῦ θηρεύοντος παγίσιν ἐάλωσαν.

201 Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha* (n. 9 above), 24–25 (chap. 13): μή τι εἰς ἐμὲ ἀνεκεφαλαιώθη ἡ ἱστορία τοῦ Ἀδάμ; ὥσπερ γὰρ ὁ Ἀδάμ ἐν τῇ ὥρᾳ τῆς δοξολογίας αὐτοῦ ἦν καὶ ἦλθεν ὁ ὄφεις καὶ εὗρε τὴν Εὐάν μόνην καὶ ἐξηπάτησεν, οὕτως κάμοι ἐγένετο. I assume that ὥρα τῆς δοξολογίας refers to Adam’s glorifying God, which further highlights his piety and the irresponsible behavior of Eve: while he was praising his Creator, she was disrespecting both of them through her disastrous disobedience.

guilt is particularly highlighted through their identical gestures before the accusing angel, a departure from the standard iconography that faithfully illustrates the biblical delegation of blame from Adam to Eve and from Eve to the serpent (Genesis 3:12–13, compare figs. 8–9).<sup>205</sup>

Linardou suggests that the biblically accurate sequencing of scenes in the Paris Kokkinobaphos was the result of the insertion of the miniature into the passage of the second homily emphasizing Adam's culpability, rather than in the exposition on Eve's guilt in the next passage, which was illustrated in the Vatican Kokkinobaphos.<sup>206</sup> I see both the different placement and iconography of the scene in the Paris copy as meant to shift attention away from Eve's guilt, precisely because the intended audience is male. Iakobos and possibly other monks in his monastic community would not have needed an extra reminder of Eve's culpability as they were already advocates for her blame, in accordance with the biblical story and male-dominated Byzantine culture, in which misogynistic statements abounded. Perhaps the interest of Iakobos and his brothers focused on the responsibility and reproachable conduct of both Adam and Eve because contrition and repentance were prominent features of monastic

life and mentality.<sup>207</sup> In this context, Adam's lapse of judgment and his inability to resist the undue influence of his inferior partner would prompt the monks to contemplate their conduct and feel shame and contrition for their own sins and for those of humankind as they prayed for the forgiveness of the world. At the same time, the textual and visual references in the Paris Kokkinobaphos to the disastrous effects of subverted hierarchy—when a seated Adam is corrupted by a standing Eve—would have worked to reinforce socially and culturally constructed stereotypes about the divinely approved order of things and the “proper” place of men and women.

In contrast, the Vatican miniature of the fall starkly highlights Eve's culpability and Adam's moral superiority. As Linardou has observed, this suggests that the male author and miniaturist, working in close collaboration, presented Eirene with a gender-charged statement intended to validate and promote the subordination of women. It is possible that the sebastokratorissa understood it as such, but it is also possible that in the context of this Marian homiliary she could have interpreted the first woman's sin in the more empowering way that I have suggested above: Eve's fall led to Mary's exaltation. Because of the sin of the first mother, the Virgin became the Mother of God, and through her female nature was not just restored to grace, but honored beyond comparison. Motherhood became the gateway to salvation, through which the glory of being united with divinity in the person of Christ was bestowed on human nature. Indeed, when Adam suddenly ages after eating the fruit, his features become Christ-like, which might suggest that the path is now open for the advent of the new Adam (fig. 7, top left). It is useful to bear in mind that contradictions are not simply unavoidable in human experience, they are also the cause and effect of much of its richness and diversity, as they resonate with the potential of varied interpretations. In this context Eirene could have subscribed to the interpretation that does not see Eve and Mary as polar opposites, but as mother and daughter

Adam's moral resistance. See Weitzmann and Bernabò, *Byzantine Octateuchs* (n. 198 above), 1:34–35, 2: figs. 83–86.

205 It should be noted that in Genesis 3:12 Adam seems to imply that his fall is also God's responsibility, since he was the one who introduced him to Eve: “The woman whom you gave (to be) with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.” “Ἡ γυνή, ἣν ἔδωκας μετ’ ἐμοῦ, αὕτη μοι ἔδωκεν ἀπὸ τοῦ ξύλου, καὶ ἔφαγον.” In the Septuagint text, the repetition of the verb “gave” (ἔδωκας and ἔδωκεν) further reinforces the sinister analogy between God giving Eve to Adam and Eve giving the fruit to Adam, which implies not only that God and Eve are both culpable for Adam's fall, but that Eve is comparable to the forbidden and deadly fruit. In the second Kokkinobaphos homily (§§8–10) Adam blames Eve for the fall, but he also admits his own responsibility and lack of judgment. See PG 127:577D–584A. Paragraph 8 refers to Adam's lamentation and shame for his disobedience, which caused not only his own punishment, but that of humankind. In paragraph 9 Adam strongly condemns Eve for being treacherous instead of helpful to the one she was destined to serve and obey; he also mentions Satan's envy as leading to the trickery of the serpent and laments the loss of paradise and the shame of his lowly status after his expulsion. He deplores his disobedience and sinfulness and marvels at the magnanimity of God, who is still prepared to forgive and save humanity. The same feelings of contrition and gratefulness are the theme of paragraph 10.

206 Linardou, “Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited” (n. 1 above), 391–92.

207 For example, sorrow and penitence feature prominently as fundamental components in the life of virtuous monks according to the *Heavenly Ladder* of John Climacus, which was particularly popular and well-known among both Byzantine monks and lay Christians. See K. Ware, “Introduction,” in *John Climacus, The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (Mahwah, NJ, 1982), 14–16.



who together make possible the incarnation and bring exceptional honor to human nature.

Rebecca, another biblical woman who exemplifies the dynamic vitality of contradictions, appears prominently in the second Kokkinobaphos frontispiece. Her support of her younger son Jacob at the expense of the firstborn Esau is described in positive terms even by the male authors of the Byzantine tradition, who recognized in her actions the path that led Jacob to triumph: first exiled to avoid his brother's wrath, he came into great blessings and fortune, finally becoming a patriarch and Christ's forefather.<sup>208</sup> This contextual evaluation of the sin of lying as a means to a positive outcome is analogous to the more flexible and polysemantic approach that Eirene might have used to read Eve's role in human history against the negative perception of the first mother usually embraced by Byzantine men. In a sense, the tribulations and final triumph that characterized Jacob's life due to the influence of his mother parallel the history of humanity under the influence of two other mothers, Eve and Mary. Rebecca appears at the beginning of the second Kokkinobaphos homily, in which Eve's fall is prominently depicted; this might have inspired a reader like Eirene to draw parallels between the two women. However, Rebecca's representation has much wider implications and significantly enriches the homiliaries' discourse on gender construction, making her an important subject for close analysis. She appears in the second frontispiece as a catalyst in Jacob's life and the composition is structured to emphasize her bond with her son (fig. 5). Thus motherhood is highlighted as a supreme value, which relates both to the role of the Theotokos as Mother of God and to Eirene as a woman who sought prestige and power through her traditional role as a mother. In the following paragraphs I shall demonstrate how the exceptional depiction of Rebecca and two other biblical mothers, Anna and Elizabeth, in the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries was intended to reinforce the notion of Mary and Eirene as exemplary mothers.

### Christology, Mariology, and Motherhood: Rebecca's Polyvalence

The presentation of Rebecca in the second Kokkinobaphos frontispiece as the mother of the main protagonist is important in three ways: historically, since she

is the person who initiates Jacob's transformation into a patriarch and Christ's forefather; typologically, since she is a prefiguration of Mary and the Church; and morally/culturally, since she is an exemplary mother. These aspects of her character are interrelated and significantly enrich the function of the frontispiece as a successful visual introduction to the main themes of the second homily. On the contrary, in past scholarship this frontispiece has been misunderstood as unsuccessful, driving attention away from the theological focus of the text. I will therefore discuss it in its entirety in order to highlight its complexity and sophistication, and shed more light on Rebecca's motherhood as a highly meaningful component of the whole.

The top register of the frontispiece shows Jacob greeting his father before departing for Mesopotamia in search of Laban, his maternal uncle, whose daughters he will marry (fig. 5). His mother, Rebecca, and a maid witness the event at the far right of the composition. The second register shows Jacob taking off his boots in order to cross the Jordan, and the bottom register represents his dream of the heavenly ladder that in patristic exegesis is interpreted as a prefiguration of Mary connecting earth and heaven through her role in the incarnation. In previous scholarship it has been suggested that, in comparison to the other typological composition of the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries, the second frontispiece contains superfluous narrative details in the top two registers, diverting attention from the ladder, which is relegated to the bottom register. In addition, the top register is seen as presenting an incongruous narrative because the miniaturist depended too closely on the images in an illustrated Octateuch, clumsily compiling several scenes in one register.<sup>209</sup> Alternatively, it has been suggested that the inclusion of Isaac in this depiction of Jacob's story was meant to emphasize the lineage of the patriarchs, who were the forefathers of David and thus of Mary and her son.<sup>210</sup> I believe the latter was a contributing factor, but there are many more significant reasons for the iconographic choices, and these may explain all the details of this unusual frontispiece, including the prominence of Rebecca. Below I will argue that the three registers were composed to emphasize ideas central

208 Discussed in greater detail below, 308–9.

209 Linardou, "Depicting the Salvation," 137–38, esp. 138.

210 Ibid., 138.

in the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts: Christological and Mariological typology that interprets the Old Testament as a prefiguration of human salvation fulfilled in the New Testament through Mary and her son; and motherhood as a noble role that empowers women, giving them prestige and influence within the parameters of Byzantium's patriarchal culture.

The typological significance of Jacob's story, including the episode of his blessing by his father and the role of his mother, is amply attested in Byzantine exegetical sources ranging from scriptural interpretation to hymnography.<sup>211</sup> Below I will make use of this material, but first I would like to emphasize that the biblical story itself provides a number of important clues that could justify its detailed presentation and prominence in the Kokkinobaphos frontispiece. Familiarity with the biblical text alone would have allowed the producers and users of the homiliary to relate it to basic Christian concepts and to the influential role of Rebecca as mother.

The story of Jacob as narrated in Genesis 25–33 is that of exile from one's homeland, trials overcome through virtue and divine guidance, and final return to the ancestral home, the promised land of Israel, with great fortune and blessings from God. In a sense this story parallels the return of humankind to paradise, a theme that is extensively discussed in the second homily, introduced by this frontispiece, and visualized in miniatures including the expulsion of Adam and Eve, their lamentation, the deserted paradise, and the return to paradise of the just led by the resurrected Christ (figs. 7, 10, 11). Hutter has astutely observed that the rivers of paradise prominent in depictions of Eden are echoed in the frontispiece representation of the Jordan (compare figs. 5 and 7).<sup>212</sup> The depiction of the earthly river that symbolizes the paradisiacal bodies of water in the middle register of the frontispiece, above the heavenly ladder, further emphasizes that this ladder is

the way back to Eden. Thus, far from being a superfluous detail, Jacob's crossing of the Jordan enhances the understanding of the ladder/Mary as the path of return to paradise. Indeed, the desire to create this visual parallel led to a resequencing of the historical order of episodes: as Hutter has noted, Jacob's dream of the ladder occurred within the promised land, before he crossed the river that demarcated the eastern boundary of his ancestral home as he traveled to Mesopotamia. Instead, in the Kokkinobaphos frontispiece the crossing is purposefully depicted before the dream: taking Jordan as an allusion to paradise, this arrangement emphasizes how Mary the ladder unites earth and heaven, allowing the Logos to descend to earth and humans to ascend to heaven.<sup>213</sup> Such careful planning in the design of the bottom two registers suggests that we should closely investigate the significance of the top register as well.

The text of the second homily includes references to Jacob's life as the beginning of divine interventions signaling the favor of God toward his people and preparing them for the supreme gift of the Creator's own son.<sup>214</sup> The frontispiece echoes the central theme of progression toward salvation through the incarnation that is made possible through Mary the ladder—a biblical type that is explicitly mentioned in the second homily.<sup>215</sup> In this light it is worth reconsidering the frontispiece's caption, which reads: "Jacob's farewell

211 See the examples mentioned below. Byzantine homilies and hymns that employ Old Testament types to illuminate Christian beliefs are no less exegetical than patristic biblical commentaries that are entirely dedicated to the interpretation of the Old Testament from a Christian perspective. In both cases, exegesis is the interpretation of holy scripture in order to unveil the divine plan for human salvation that is prefigured in the Old and fulfilled in the New Testament and the life of the Church.

212 Hutter, "Die Homilien," 226–29; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 27.

213 Hutter, "Die Homilien," 226–27; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 27.

214 Homily 2.4, PG 127:569D–573A: Joachim and Anna pray to God to grant them a child by invoking how he reversed the barrenness of Sarah, Isaac's mother, and Hannah, Samuel's mother, and performed numerous other miracles for the salvation of their forefathers. They begin their enumeration of those miracles with Jacob (572B), who received divine blessing and was renamed Israel. They continue with references to the miracles performed during the Exodus from Egypt. The author of the homily concludes that thanks to the sincere plea of the virtuous couple, they became parents of the immaculate Virgin who through her son brought about the regeneration of human nature and its restitution to its original glory.

215 Homily 2.6, PG 127:576B: "has the ladder been raised, through which the king of heavenly powers will descend in our lowest abode?" Homily 2.12, PG 127:584D: through Mary's birth "the heavenly were united with the earthly" (an obvious evocation of Mary as the ladder). Homily 2.20 PG 127:597AB, Mary is the instrument of salvation: "You constructed her as a bridge passing over the tribulations of the world and conducting to peace. You raised her as a ladder, leading from sadness to joy and from earth to heaven."



[departing] toward Laban in Mesopotamia.”<sup>216</sup> This is not an inaccurate or elliptic caption:<sup>217</sup> it fits the theme of all three registers without specifically mentioning the crossing of Jordan and the dream of the ladder that take place on Jacob’s way to Mesopotamia. Informed Byzantine viewers would be familiar with the Marian connotations of the ladder, which was prominent in their literary tradition, including hymns and homilies regularly performed on church feasts.<sup>218</sup> The caption directs attention to the governing theme of departure/exile in the life of Jacob, which would bring to mind the entire story, including his return home and the symbolic implications for the return of humankind to paradise via the Marian ladder. In addition, Jacob’s departure was a consequence of his taking the right of primogeniture away from his brother Esau, forcing the younger son to face trials that lead to further blessings from God, all of which resulted in Jacob’s becoming Israel’s patriarch and Christ’s forefather. The first register of the frontispiece emphasizes the Christological significance of the story by depicting Jacob between the patriarch Isaac (traditionally understood as an antetype of Christ)<sup>219</sup> and his mother Rebecca, who according to the Genesis narrative orchestrated the blessing exchange and the departure of her son.

In this context the top register’s depiction of Rebecca making a speaking gesture behind her son as he greets his father is not an incongruous detail due to uncritical copying of a model.<sup>220</sup> On the contrary, it reinforces the message of the frontispiece by highlighting the mother’s role in the story: it was because of her love for Jacob and her trickery that her younger son stole his father’s blessing, angering his older brother, Esau, who became set on killing Jacob for revenge.<sup>221</sup> Rebecca orchestrated Jacob’s life-saving departure by convincing Isaac that Jacob should not marry local

women.<sup>222</sup> Hence his journey to Mesopotamia, where he earned great fortune and blessings from God, allowing him to return home and reconcile with his brother. In other words, it was because of his mother’s actions that Jacob faced tribulations that led to triumphs, and helped transform him into a major patriarch of Israel and Christ’s forefather. Rebecca’s significant role in the story is emphasized through her speaking gesture, and her powerful bond with her son is conveyed by the intense red color of his tunic and her *maphorion*. The prominent depiction of Rebecca next to the type of maid that often appears indoors in Kokkinobaphos miniatures to suggest the world of the household (cf. figs. 4, 28–29) is a tribute to the power of motherhood and a reference to the realm of female activities that influence the life of men. Indeed, Rebecca wears the same red *maphorion* and light blue tunic as Anna, Mary’s exemplary mother, who appears repeatedly in the Kokkinobaphos miniatures, usually tending to her daughter, and is frequently praised in the homilies for her piety and maternal dedication.<sup>223</sup> Another significant parallel between Rebecca and Anna is their miraculous pregnancies, which indicate the special nature of their offspring. The text of the second Kokkinobaphos homily mentions Sarah and Hannah as Old Testament examples of barren women who, like Anna, became fertile through divine intervention.<sup>224</sup> The frontispiece to the homily complements those references by depicting Rebecca (as well as Isaac, the fruit of Sarah’s womb).

The extent to which the top register of this Kokkinobaphos frontispiece was planned to visualize the internal dynamics and significance of Jacob’s story can be further appreciated through a brief comparison with the Octateuch miniatures. The eleventh-century Octateuch (Vat. gr. 747) and the three twelfth-century Octateuchs (Seraglio G. I. 8, Smyrna A.1, and Vat. gr. 746) include the same set of images with only slight variations.<sup>225</sup> First Isaac sends Esau out to hunt for his

216 Hutter, “Die Homilien,” 223; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 27. Ὁ ἀποχαιρετισμὸς τοῦ Ἰακώβ πρὸς Λάβαν εἰς Μεσοποταμίαν.

217 As suggested by Linardou, “Depicting the Salvation,” 138.

218 See n. 46 above.

219 For example, Epiphanius, *Homilia in divini corporis sepulturam*, PG 43:452–53. For more patristic references see L. Brubaker, *Vision and Meaning in Ninth Century Byzantium: Image and Exegesis in the Homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge, 1999), 208.

220 As suggested by Linardou, “Depicting the Salvation,” 138.

221 Genesis 25:28, 27:5–17.

222 Genesis 27:42–46.

223 Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, is also given a prominent role in the text and images of the sixth homily (discussed below).

224 See n. 214 above. See below for exegetical references that draw parallels between Rebecca’s reversed infertility and Mary’s virginal fertility.

225 For images and descriptions of the following miniatures see Weitzmann and Bernabò, *Byzantine Octateuchs* (n. 198 above), 1:97–100, 2: figs. 371–86. For a discussion of the Octateuchs as

meal. The son stands obedient, his arms crossed in front of his chest. The father lies in bed in Vat. gr. 747, but is seated on a stool in the twelfth-century manuscripts. Rebecca peeks through a curtain behind her husband in Vat. gr. 747, but in the twelfth-century Octateuchs she appears standing behind Isaac, raising the hem of her mantle close to her face, perhaps to suggest secrecy, shame, and anxiety over her plot to deceive her husband. This deception is depicted in a second register within the same frame: Isaac lies in bed on the left, Jacob pretending to be Esau approaches with the meal in the center, and Rebecca stands on the right, making a speaking gesture that suggests she is the one who instructed her younger son to impersonate his older brother. In the next scene, Esau presents the meal to Isaac in bed, and after realizing the deception, turns around to pursue Jacob. In the following composition a seated Rebecca advises a standing Jacob to flee to Mesopotamia, and within the same frame a standing Rebecca shares with a seated Isaac her distress about the possibility that Jacob might marry a Canaanite woman. This prompts Isaac's action in the next miniature: seated in front of Jacob, he advises his son to go to Mesopotamia in order to find a wife among the daughters of Laban. The boy stands obedient, his arms crossed before his chest (repeating the gesture of Esau when he was sent in the fields to hunt). In all the manuscripts the hierarchical relationship of the figures is clearly indicated by whether they are seated or standing: Isaac appears either on a stool or in bed in front of his standing sons or wife; Rebecca is seated in front of a standing Jacob, but she stands when she speaks to a seated Isaac.

Two significant features are peculiar to the three twelfth-century Octateuchs alone. First, they give greater emphasis to the mother by presenting her in full behind Isaac when he sends Esau to the fields. Second, they depict the patriarch lying in bed only when he receives the meal from Jacob or Esau, while Vat. gr. 747 also shows him in bed in the scene in which he asks Esau to hunt for him. This depiction is actually closer to the Genesis narrative, which mentions Isaac's infirmity and his desire to eat meat procured by his son.<sup>226</sup> However, the twelfth-century Octateuchs' use of the

reclining pose only when the father receives the meals and blesses each son accordingly creates a significant visual context for the Kokkinobaphos frontispiece. The image of Isaac prostrate (instead of seated) before a standing Jacob in the Kokkinobaphos miniature does not simply illustrate the moment the father sends his son to Mesopotamia, as the caption specifies; it also recalls the scene of a prone Isaac blessing a standing Jacob, the critical event that instigated both the trip to Mesopotamia and the elevation of the younger son to the status that would make him the great patriarch of Israel and forefather of Christ. Likewise, in the same frontispiece the depiction of a seated Rebecca making a speaking gesture recalls the Octateuch scene that illustrates her advising Jacob to flee.

Through the process of inter pictoriality, the Kokkinobaphos miniature alludes to other significant episodes of the narrative, revealing the deeper meaning of the story and the roles of the participants. It is very probable that Eirene, or other members of her circle who would have had access to the Kokkinobaphos manuscript, might have seen an illustrated Octateuch like those surviving from the twelfth century. In any case, the miniaturist of the Kokkinobaphos homiliary would have been familiar with the Octateuch iconography, since it has been convincingly argued that he participated in the production of the Seraglio Octateuch.<sup>227</sup> In the second Kokkinobaphos frontispiece the painter did not produce a derivative and erroneous composition by uncritically combining different narrative episodes in a single scene.<sup>228</sup> On the contrary, he used the subtle iconographic elements of Jacob's story from the illustrated Genesis text to produce a new, highly sophisticated, and multilayered representation of Jacob's departure that reinforced the themes of the Kokkinobaphos codices.

The exegetical interpretations of Jacob's story in Byzantine tradition further illuminate its Christological significance and give great prominence to Rebecca, detailing her typological significance and praising her exemplary motherhood. Genesis already specifies that the twin boys born to Rebecca refer to two different

a creation of the middle Byzantine period see J. Lowden, *The Octateuchs: A Study in Byzantine Manuscript Illustration* (University Park, 1992).

226 Genesis 27:1–4.

227 J. Anderson, "The Seraglio Octateuch and the Kokkinobaphos Master," *DOP* 36 (1982): 83–114, esp. 89–93.

228 As suggested by Linardou, "Depicting the Salvation," 138.



nations,<sup>229</sup> and the major differences in their characters and life trajectories reinforce that idea. Christian exegetes explain those differences, and especially the fact that Jacob is blessed as the first-born instead of Esau, as a prefiguration of the Christians' replacing the Jews as the new chosen people of God.<sup>230</sup> Exegetes also emphasize that because of that blessing, Christ was born from Jacob's bloodline, in accordance with the prophecy that a star would rise out of Jacob.<sup>231</sup> Like other patriarchs, Jacob is considered an antetype of Christ.<sup>232</sup> In this exegetical context Rebecca is given special prominence as a symbol of the Church, which takes care of her virtuous children (or rewards all children according to their deeds, thus preferring the meek Jacob to the

aggressive Esau, who was the legal heir).<sup>233</sup> In addition, Rebecca is likened to the ultimate mother/protector/mediator, the Virgin Mary, a prominent symbol and embodiment of the Church. These ideas are central in the hymn that Romanos Melodos dedicated to Jacob's blessing by Isaac, to be sung on the fifth Sunday of Lent.<sup>234</sup> Moreover, exegetes note that Rebecca's miraculously reversed sterility was an Old Testament prefiguration of the even more miraculous virginal birth of Christ, offering proof of the omnipotence of God.<sup>235</sup> Even the fact that Rebecca was chosen as Isaac's bride when she was first seen next to a well (Genesis 24) is paralleled to the annunciation and the choice of Mary as God's bride, which, according to the *Protevangelion*, first happened next to a well.<sup>236</sup> Finally, a prominent motif in Christian authors' estimation of Rebecca is her exemplary motherhood: in choosing to promote and protect the better of her two sons despite the risks, in giving him good counsel and cleverly orchestrating the blessing and his escape to Mesopotamia, she is exalted as a wise mother acting under divine guidance, becoming a valuable instrument for the fulfillment of God's plans. Indeed her rather deceitful behavior is unequivocally justified and praised as the result of

229 Genesis 25:21–23. Septuagint translation by Brenton: "And Isaac prayed the Lord concerning Rebecca his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord heard him, and his wife Rebecca conceived in her womb. And the babes leaped within her; and she said, If it will be so with me, why is this to me? And she went to enquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her, 'There are two nations in thy womb and two peoples shall be separated from thy belly, and one people shall excel the other, and the elder shall serve the younger.'"

230 For example, Hippolytus of Rome, *De benedictionibus Isaaci et Jacobi*, ed. M. Brière, L. Mariès, and B. C. Mercier, *Hippolyte de Rome, Sur les bénédictions d'Isaac, de Jacob et de Moïse*, PO 27 (Turnhout, 1954), 10, 14, 16, 30. Romanos Melodos, *Cantica*, 4, §19, 3–4, ed. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes*, vol. 1, SC 99 (Paris, 1964), 192. Alternatively, Jacob symbolizes the virtuous believers of God, Christians who were previously Jews or polytheists, as opposed to the unbelievers whose heels are struck (a reference to Jacob clinging to Esau's heel as they were born, Genesis 25:26). For example, Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 6.7.60, ed. L. Früchtel, O. Stählin, and U. Treu, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, vol. 2, GCS 15 (Berlin, 1939), 462. An alternative interpretation is that Esau and Jacob symbolize the *ecclesia ex gentibus* and *ecclesia ex circumcisione* (the polytheists and Jews who became Christians). For example, Athanasius, *Questiones ad Antiochum ducem*, PG 28:633B. Yet another interpretation sees Jacob and Esau as referring to orthodox vs. heretical Christians. For example, Gregory of Nyssa, *In sanctum Ephraim*, PG 46:844B.

231 Numbers 24:17: "A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel." Mentioned, for example, by Athanasios, *De incarnatione verbi* §33.4, ed. C. Kannengiesser, *Sur l'incarnation du verbe*, SC 199 (Paris, 1973), 384. Romanos Melodos, *Cantica*, 10, §5.9–10 (kontakion for Christmas), ed. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes*, vol. 2, SC 110 (Paris, 1965), 54.

232 For example, Hippolytus of Rome, *De benedictionibus Isaaci et Jacobi*, ed. Brière et al., 14, 18–26, where Jacob is said to prefigure Christ's birth from the Virgin (which implies that Rebecca prefigures Mary). Epiphanius, *Homilia in divini corporis sepulturam*, PG 43:452–53. Gregory of Nyssa, *In diem lunum*, E. Gebhardt, *Gregorii Nysseni opera* (Leiden, 1967), 9.1:232, lines 19–20.

233 For example, Hippolytus of Rome, *De benedictionibus Isaaci et Jacobi*, ed. Brière et al., 14, 18. Gregory of Nazianzos, *Funebris oratio in laudem Basilii Magni Caesareae in Cappadocia episcopi* (oration 43), ed. F. Boulenger, *Grégoire de Nazianze, Discours funèbres en l'honneur de son frère Césaire et de Basile de Césarée* (Paris, 1908), 71. This homily was read on the feast day of Basil the Great on 1 January, and therefore the reference to Rebecca as a prefiguration of the Church must have been a familiar concept to the Byzantines. For the reading of the homily see G. Galavaris, *The Illustrations of the Liturgical Homilies of Gregory Nazianzenus* (Princeton, 1969), 11.

234 Romanos Melodos, *Cantica*, 4, ed. J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes*, 172–92. Indeed, the opening lines of the hymn present an analogy between Rebecca's advice that secured Jacob the blessing of his father, and Mary's intercession that provides Christians with the blessing of Christ (§1, 172). Further on (§11–12, 184–86) Rebecca is the first to recognize that Jacob's blessing prefigures the incarnation of Christ. The closing of the hymn (§19, 192) presents Esau and Jacob as the prefiguration (typos) of the Jews and Christians, and exalts Rebecca as a prefiguration of the Church.

235 For example, John Chrysostom, *Peccata fratrum non evulganda*, PG 51:359–61. Idem, *In Genesim*, PG 53:442–46.

236 This parallel is made by Gregory of Nyssa, *In diem lunum*, 9.1:231. For the annunciation at the well in the *Protevangelion* see Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha* (n. 9 above), 21 (chap. 11). This episode is described and illustrated in the fifth Kokkinobaphos homily: Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 117v (Stornajolo, *Omélie di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 50); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 159v (Omont, *Homélies du moine Jacques*, pl. XX).

her maternal instinct and divine providence.<sup>237</sup> This interpretation recognizes that women can be empowered through motherhood, which could provide positive role models within the patriarchal restrictions of Byzantine society and increase women's sense of self-worth and pride.

The visual prominence of Rebecca in the second Kokkinobaphos frontispiece and the textual and cultural references it would have evoked emphasize her motherly influence in the biblical story and complement the focus on Mary's motherhood. This sanctified female role would have been particularly significant for the patroness of this lavish Marian project, Eirene the sebastokratorissa, who sought prestige and recognition in the traditional role of mother.<sup>238</sup> The focus on motherhood that exalted the holy protagonist of the homilies and linked her to their pious commissioner

is further enhanced by prominent references to Anna and Elizabeth, to which I will now turn.

### Praising Exemplary Mothers: Anna and Elizabeth

Anna, the mother of Mary, and Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, are prominently exalted in both the text and the images of the Kokkinobaphos homilies in ways that go far beyond the *Protevangelion* or the Gospel accounts. This unusual emphasis on their exemplary conduct seems designed to address and acknowledge Eirene's investment in motherhood as an empowering role.

The first Kokkinobaphos homily corresponds to chapters 1–4 of the *Protevangelion*, which give special prominence to Anna's suffering and prayers concerning her infertility. The Kokkinobaphos author is even more lavish in his praise of Anna, stating that her sorrow and patience were twice as great as Joachim's, as she was afflicted by both his withdrawal in the desert and the contempt of those who criticized her for her barrenness. Anna is also praised for her bravery, piety, and generosity, which lead her to invent a daring new offering to God as a thanksgiving for his blessing: the dedication of a female child to the temple.<sup>239</sup> Besides illustrating Anna's prayer in her garden, where she receives the news of her miraculous pregnancy, the miniaturist has illustrated her encounter with her husband, which is mentioned in the *Protevangelion* but not in the Kokkinobaphos homily.<sup>240</sup> An interesting detail has been inserted into the scene, one absent even from the *Protevangelion*: Anna puts aside her spindle and red wool as she rises from her seat to meet Joachim (fig. 4).<sup>241</sup> In this way she conforms to the model of the

237 For example, Basil the Great, *Homilia in principium proverbiorum*, PG 31:412A. John Chrysostom, *Ad Stagirium a daemone vexatum*, PG 47:464D. Idem, *In Genesim*, PG 54:448, Rebecca has prudence (σύνεσις). PG 54:451, she is God-loving (φιλόθεος). PG 54:464–70, God works his will through Rebecca; her love and excellent advice to Jacob serve divine providence: “Ὅρα μητρός φιλοστοργίαν, μᾶλλον δὲ Θεοῦ οἰκονομίαν. Αὐτὸς γὰρ ἦν ὁ καὶ ταύτην πρὸς τὴν συμβουλὴν διεγείρων, καὶ τὸ πᾶν κατορθωθῆναι ποιών. Εἶδες τῆς μητρός τὴν ἀρίστην συμβουλὴν”; guided by God and by her true love, she reassures Jacob that she will take upon her Esau's curse, so that her younger son takes courage and goes ahead with their plan. Her wisdom and God's help allow the plot to succeed, so that Jacob is rewarded for his virtue through the primogeniture blessing: “Τί οὖν ἡ Ῥεβέκκα, ἡ θαυμασία καὶ φιλόστοργος; Ἐπειδὴ οὐκ ἐξ οἰκείας γνώμης μόνον τοῦτο διεπράττετο, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῇ ἄνωθεν ὑπηρετεῖτο προῤῥήσει, πᾶσαν σπουδὴν ποιεῖται τὸν φόβον ἐξελεῖν τοῦ παιδός, καὶ θάρσος ἐνθεῖναι, ὥστε τὴν συμβουλὴν εἰς ἔργον ἀγαγεῖν. . . . Θεά μοι ἐνταῦθα τῆς Ῥεβέκκας μετὰ τῆς φιλοστοργίας καὶ τὴν πολλὴν σοφίαν. . . . Σκόπει μοι πάλιν ἐνταῦθα, πῶς τῆς ἄνωθεν χάριτος ἦν τὸ πᾶν. . . . Ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ συνεργῶν τοῖς γινομένοις, ἅπαντα εἰς ἔργον ἐξήει. . . . Ὅρα πῶς δέικνται ὅτι τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ χάριτος ἦν τὸ πᾶν, τῆς παρασκευαζούσης καὶ αὐτὸν μηδὲν τῶν γινομένων συνιδεῖν, καὶ τὸν Ἰακώβ ἀπολαῦσαι τῆς πατρικῆς εὐλογίας. . . . ὁ δὲ Θεὸς ὁ τὰ μέλλοντα προορῶν, καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν τρόπων ἀρετῆς χαρακτηρίζων καὶ δεικνὺς τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ θεράποντας, οὕτως ἅπαντα οἰκονομεῖ.” PG 54:473, as an admirable and loving mother Rebecca continues to give excellent advice, so that Jacob can escape his brother's wrath by seeking a wife in Mesopotamia: “Ἀλλ' ἡ θαυμασία μήτηρ τοῦτο αἰσθομένη, πάλιν τὴν μητρικὴν φιλοστοργίαν περὶ τὸν παῖδα ἐπιδείκνυται καὶ συμβουλὴν εἰσάγει τὴν δυναμένην αὐτὸν ἐξαρπάσαι τῶν τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ χειρῶν.”

238 The very public statements that Eirene made through the dedication of precious veils to Marian icons in Constantinople (discussed above) mention the well-being of her children as a main concern and reflect the importance of motherhood in Eirene's life.

239 See Homily 1.9–13, PG 127:556B–564A. Similar praises to Anna are included in the second sermon of George of Nicomedia on Mary's conception by Anna, which Iakobos used as a source for his homily (see PG 100:1357–72, esp. 1369B–72A about Anna's novel decision to dedicate a female child to the temple). Even if Iakobos's praises of Anna and other biblical mothers are not entirely novel, we must acknowledge his decision to include such references in his own homilies. More examples are mentioned below.

240 Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha* (n. 9 above), 8–9 (chap. 4).

241 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 16r (Stornajolo, *Omèlie di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 6); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 21v (Omout, *Homèlies du moine Jacques*, pl. III) (both n. 1 above). I am not aware of another depiction of this event that includes the detail of Anna spinning before meeting her husband. For the standard Byzantine iconography of the scene see

industrious housewife, dedicated to textile production, and foreshadows Mary's commitment to spinning, which is showcased in the miniatures of the fifth and sixth homilies. Spinning might also be a symbol of conception and the weaving of the child's body in Anna's womb; her belly appears conspicuously full as she stands to meet her husband after learning of her miraculous fertility. The symbol of the thread as the material of new life is also employed in the annunciation. In addition, the visual echoes between Anna's and Mary's spinning underline the unfolding of the mystery of the incarnation: the miraculous conception of Mary's pure body in Anna's womb is the first step toward the even more extraordinary conception of Christ's divinely imbued body in the Virgin's womb. Anna spins her daughter's blood, which will be woven into the human veil Mary will create for the incarnation of the Logos.

It is possible that Anna's spinning in this miniature was inspired by a reference to Elizabeth in the *Protevangelion* that is not illustrated in the homiliaries: she is said to have "set aside her scarlet and run to the door and opened it" to receive and praise Mary as the mother of the Savior.<sup>242</sup> In other words, according to this apocryphal text, Elizabeth was spinning a scarlet thread just before the baby in her womb rejoiced at the proximity of Christ in Mary's womb.<sup>243</sup> Here, again, spinning refers to female identity and the creation of life. But while Mary spins the purple when she learns of the incarnation, Elizabeth spins scarlet just before they meet and she becomes aware of her cousin's miraculous pregnancy. Both colors are precious and symbolic of royal honor, and both are emblematic of blood, suggesting life and sacrifice, but while the Virgin is the Mother of God, Elizabeth is the mother of his forerunner, and so the hierarchy of purple and scarlet reflects the women's roles and their relative honor. It is interesting that in the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries Elizabeth's spinning is not referenced in the text or the miniatures, but Anna's spinning is introduced in the visual material, emphasizing spinning as a symbol of the incarnation that proceeds through Mary's bloodline.

Anna's prominence in the story is further highlighted by another element in the illustration of the

first homily: while the *Protevangelion* and the homily mention Joachim making offerings to the temple by himself,<sup>244</sup> Anna is also depicted holding gifts.<sup>245</sup> This is the earliest surviving Byzantine depiction of the subject and it conforms to the standard iconography of the scene in later examples, where both parents are shown.<sup>246</sup> This departure from the *Protevangelion* narrative is significant, revealing an intention to highlight Anna's piety and her concern about her infertility, thus showcasing her exemplary pursuit of motherhood.<sup>247</sup> It is possible that this departure from such a highly regarded account was meant to present Anna as a model for Byzantine women, who often appear in literary sources pleading for divine help to combat sterility.<sup>248</sup>

244 Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha*, 1–3, 10 (chaps. 1 and 5, referring to the initial refusal and final acceptance of Joachim's gifts to the temple). Compare Kokkinobaphos, *Homily* 1.5–8. PG 127:549B–556B.

245 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 8v (Stornajolo, *Omélie di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 4); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 11v (Omont, *Homélies du moine Jacques*, Ps. II).

246 The few earlier surviving examples are from Georgia and Russia. See the discussion of this iconography and relevant visual material from Byzantium and its periphery by Lafontaine-Dosogne, "Cycle of the Life of the Virgin," 167–68.

247 The *Protevangelion* doesn't mention the temple offerings as gifts in exchange for the couple's fertility (on the contrary it specifies that the offerings are rejected by the high priest because of their infertility). However, in the culture of gift exchange characteristic of most religious systems, including Judaism and Christianity, we can assume that temple offerings regularly accompanied requests for divine blessing, which in the case of Joachim and Anna was desired specifically for the achievement of parenthood. God accepted the gifts as a sign of the couple's piety (even though the high priest rejected them), and granted them fertility for which more gifts were offered, and accepted even by the priest. The second Kokkinobaphos homily includes a relevant comment: under the letter of the law infertility was seen as a sign of impiety for which the gifts were rejected by the priest, forcing Joachim and Anna to resort to the invocation of divine grace; but in God's eyes their virtue was undeniable. See Homily 2.3, PG 127:569BC.

248 See A.-M. Talbot, *Holy Women of Byzantium: Ten Saints' Lives in English Translation* (Washington, D.C., 1996), 123, n. 29. Talbot notes that "the infertility of a saint's parents, a frequent commonplace in vitae . . . has its roots in the biblical motif of barren parents who at long last bear a holy child (e.g., Isaac, Samuel, John the Baptist). At the same time, sterility was a real problem in the Byzantine world, as suggested, for example, by the use of amulets; see J. Herrin and A. Kazhdan, *ODB* 2:994, s.v. Infertility." For spiritual and medical practices against sterility see also M.-H. Congourdeau, "Les variations du désir d'enfant à Byzance," in *Becoming Byzantine: Children and Childhood in Byzantium*, ed. A. Papaconstantinou

J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, "Iconography of the Cycle of the Life of the Virgin," in Underwood, *Kariye Djami* (n. 9 above), 4:172–74.

242 See Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha*, 23 (chap. 12).

243 The episode is mentioned in greater detail in Luke 1:39–56.



The scene also promotes the cultural construction and restriction of positive femininity to the roles of wife and mother.<sup>249</sup> The same message is central in the Kokkinobaphos miniature created for Eirene. After all, she was a woman who defined herself and her sociocultural role through the identity of her husband and sons, deriving influence from serving them as a virtuous wife and devoted mother. For Eirene, Anna's prominence in the male-dominated world of the Jewish temple, as much as her unparalleled decision to dedicate a female child to God, could have offered a model of empowerment through compliance with the patriarchal requirement of pious motherhood.

The second Kokkinobaphos homily corresponds to chapters 5–7 of the *Protevangelion*, which celebrate Anna as the mother who rejoices and thanks God after Mary's birth and the blessing of the priests organized by her husband, and turns the child's room into a sanctuary to preserve her purity. The text and miniatures of the Kokkinobaphos homily supplement the *Protevangelion* account in ways that increase the prominence of the mother:<sup>250</sup> after Mary's birth, Anna invites the tribes of Israel to celebrate the reversal of her sterility and her child's purity. In the scene of Mary's nativity, she is represented surrounded by the tribe leaders: male authority figures are gathered to praise her achievement of motherhood, and yet she stands out strikingly among them (fig. 6). Even the caption emphasizes not Mary's birth, but Anna's delivery and her position of honor

and A.-M. Talbot (Washington, D.C., 2009), 35–42. I. Kalavrezou, "Female Popular Beliefs and Maria of Alania," *TUBA/JTS* 36 (2011): 88–92, examines visual and textual evidence on the invocation of Mary or John the Baptist (son of the barren Elizabeth) by Byzantine women wishing for fertility.

249 Lafontaine-Dosogne, "Cycle of the Life of the Virgin," 168, hypothesizes that the influence of textual and visual sources (rather than sociocultural concerns) could explain the presence of Anna in the scene of the temple offerings: she mentions as evidence the *Protevangelion* reference that Anna considered the rejection of gifts an affront directed at her, and not just her husband; and the iconography of Mary's presentation to the temple, where both parents are depicted, according to the *Protevangelion* narrative of that episode.

250 Compare Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha* (n. 9 above), 10–14 (chaps. 5–7) with the Kokkinobaphos *Homily* 2.5, 2.12–18, PG 127:573B–D, 585A–593B. For all the miniatures of the second and third homily that exalt Anna see Vat. gr. 1162, fols. 29r, 38v, 41r, 43r, 44v, 46v, 57v, 59v, 62v, 64r, 65r, 67v, 68v, 74v (Stornajolo, *Omēlie di Giacomo monaco*, pls. 10, 14–18, 23–30); Paris. gr. 1208, fols. 38v, 52v, 56r, 59r, 61r, 63v, 77v, 80r, 86r, 87v, 91r, 92v, 100 bis v (Omōnt, *Homēlies du moine Jacques*, pls. IV, VII, VIII, X–XIII).

among her people: the image is labeled "Anna's parturition and the congregation of the tribe-leaders of Israel," instead of the standard "Nativity of the Theotokos."<sup>251</sup> In addition, Anna is inspired by the Holy Spirit to proclaim her daughter the instrument of human salvation. She is depicted addressing David the forefather with praises about her daughter; and she presents Mary to be blessed by the religious authorities.<sup>252</sup> In other depictions of this scene, the *Protevangelion* narrative is often respected and the father presents the daughter to the priests; the mother is away from the feast, relegated

251 This is a stark departure from the standard iconography of Mary's nativity, in which Anna is surrounded by women attending to her needs. Lafontaine-Dosogne, "Cycle of the Life of the Virgin," 174–77. In the *Protevangelion* Anna does not invite the leaders of the twelve tribes to celebrate the birth of her child, but she does mention the tribes as she rejoices about her newfound fertility on her daughter's first birthday: on this occasion Joachim invites the temple priests to bless Mary, and when Anna returns the child to her room she thanks God and exclaims: "Hear, hear the twelve tribes of Israel, that Anna is breast-feeding." Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha*, 13 (chap. 6). It is noteworthy that in the Marian sermons of George of Nikomedeia used extensively by Iakobos as sources for his homilies, Anna is said to rejoice at the birth of her daughter among her female friends, not among the leaders of the tribes, and in general she is not given the prominence that Iakobos lavishes on her (see PG 100:1416D). For the inscription accompanying the miniature see Hutter, "Die Homilien," 92–93; Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 28–29 (Τόκος Ἀννης καὶ σύγκλητος τῶν φυλάρχων Ἰ(σρα)ήλ). As Hutter observes, the presence of the tribe leaders around Anna has displaced the Virgin's bath from its primary position in the foreground, next to the mother's bed. This departure from tradition further emphasizes the exceptional honor bestowed on Anna at the expense of the nativity of the Theotokos, normally the main theme.

252 In Homily 2.13–14, PG 127:585BC, Anna mentions David while she praises her daughter as a royal descendant of the king. In the accompanying miniature Anna is seated opposite David, gesturing toward him. She holds her daughter and he holds a scroll with one of his prophecies concerning the Virgin as the gate of God (Psalm 117:20): Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 41r (Stornajolo, *Omēlie di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 15); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 56r (Omōnt, *Homēlies du moine Jacques*, pl. VII). Concerning Mary's blessing by the priests see Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha*, 12 (chap. 6): in the *Protevangelion* Joachim presents Mary to the priests and Anna takes her back to the seclusion of her room. In the Kokkinobaphos miniatures the mother assumes both roles. The text of the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries is not clear about who brings the baby to the celebration ("brought to the feast carried in an embrace"), but it does mention that the mother publicly rejoiced and presented her own wealth (Mary) to the priests, and then took her back to her room. Homily 2.15, 2.17, PG 127:589A (Ἀχθεῖσιν γὰρ ἐπ' ἀγκαλῶν φερομένης ἐπὶ τῆς εὐωχίας . . .), 592A (. . . προάγει τὸν ἐναποκείμενον θησαυρόν, καὶ δημοσίᾳ τὸν κοινὸν καὶ οἰκεῖον προστίθησι πλοῦτον . . .).

to the more private role of playing with and embracing the child.<sup>253</sup> In the second Kokkinobaphos homily, however, Anna assumes a prominent role in the public celebration of her offspring and her maternal bond with Mary is exalted, both visually and textually.

The same is true for the third Kokkinobaphos homily, which deals with the dedication of Mary to the temple. In the miniatures Anna always appears closer to her daughter than does Joachim, who stands behind his wife.<sup>254</sup> The *Protevangelion* describes how Joachim invited virgins to accompany Mary to the temple, and how both parents were amazed when their daughter did not turn to look back at them or seek their embrace when she was introduced to her new home.<sup>255</sup> The third Kokkinobaphos homily goes further, dedicating several paragraphs to the exaltation of Anna as the inspired mother who elaborately praises her daughter's role in human salvation, introduces her to the high priest Zachariah, and explains to him the paramount significance of the unusual dedication of a female child.<sup>256</sup> The visual and textual emphasis on Anna's motherhood reminds us that the bond between mothers and daughters achieved through social and cultural education was a central theme in Byzantine tradition. As Herrin has observed, it was relevant not only to lived realities, but to the ideological constructs of a male-dominated

society in which women were confined to very restrictive roles.<sup>257</sup> Anna's prominence in the Kokkinobaphos homilies suggests that conformity to those roles did not just reinforce male authority and control, but could confer dignity on and promote the empowerment of women willing to comply with cultural expectations.

Elizabeth is another prominent role model in the Kokkinobaphos homilies. The *Protevangelion* condenses the narrative of the visitation in Luke 1:39–56, including only a brief reference to her praise of Mary as the mother of the Lord.<sup>258</sup> In both sources Mary is said to stay with Elizabeth for about three months and then return to Joseph's house.<sup>259</sup> In Luke 1:57–80 the birth of John the Baptist follows Mary's departure, suggesting she was not present for it, while the *Protevangelion* does not mention John's birth.<sup>260</sup> In the sixth Kokkinobaphos homily, however, Elizabeth is given extraordinary prominence as a woman of unsurpassed faith, and new elements are introduced to highlight her piety, honorable motherhood, and strong bond with Mary: extensive passages are dedicated to the elaborate praise Elizabeth addresses to the Virgin on her arrival and departure, and both episodes are illustrated in separate miniatures (figs. 28–29).<sup>261</sup> In addition Mary remains with Elizabeth until she gives birth to John the Baptist, so that the future Mother of God

253 See Lafontaine-Dosogne, "Cycle of the Life of the Virgin" (n. 241 above), 178–79, with additional reference to surviving examples in which Anna presents Mary, either because the homiletic tradition, not the *Protevangelion*, was the source for the images, or because the church in which Anna was afforded such a prominent role was dedicated to her or the Virgin. See especially *ibid.*, 179, n. 86: in the Cretan church of Kyra Panagia (Lady All-Holy) dedicated to Mary, Anna alone presents Mary to the priests and later to the high priest in the scene of the Virgin's presentation to the temple.

254 In the standard Byzantine iconography of Mary's presentation to the temple, Anna is usually depicted closer to Mary than Joachim (the parents appear either directly behind their child or following the virgins who accompany her). However, occasionally their position is reversed, as for example in the eleventh-century Basil Menologion and the mosaic in the *katholikon* of the Daphni monastery. See Lafontaine-Dosogne, "Cycle of the Life of the Virgin," 179–81, figs. 17–20. See also the previous note, about the very rare case of Anna alone presenting Mary.

255 Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha*, 14–16 (chaps. 7–8).

256 Homily 3.7–15, PG 127:605A–616A. None of these elements are included in the fifth, sixth, and seventh sermons of George of Nikomedeia, which are about Mary's dedication to the temple and were extensively used by Iakobos as sources for his third homily. See PG 100:1402–55.

257 J. Herrin, "Mothers and Daughters in the Medieval Greek World," in *eadem*, *Unrivaled Influence* (n. 168 above), 80–114 (103–6 specifically on Anna and Mary).

258 Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha*, 23 (chap. 12).

259 Luke 1:56; Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha*, 24 (chap. 12).

260 Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha*, 24 (chap. 12).

261 Homily 6.17–38, PG 127:680A–697C, contains the narrative of Mary's first visit to Elizabeth, with all the praises addressed to John's mother for her extraordinary faith. Elizabeth's greetings to Mary on arriving and departing are in PG 127:680A–684D, and 693D–697C. The relevant miniatures are in Vat. gr. 1162, fols. 149r, 161v, 164r (Stornajolo, *Omélie di Giacomo monaco*, pls. 65, 68, 69); Paris. gr. 1208, fols. 203r, 217r (Omont, *Homélies du moine Jacques*, pl. XXV). The Vatican copy includes two miniatures dedicated to Elizabeth's farewell to Mary: one in which she accompanies the Virgin at the beginning of her return trip, and one in which she bids her younger relative farewell as she continues on alone. The Paris copy illustrates only the latter, but since several folios are missing between Mary's arrival and departure from Elizabeth's house, it is possible that the Paris copy once included the same number of miniatures (see Linardou, "Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited" [n. 1 above], 403–4). For a discussion of all the miniatures concerning Mary's visit to Elizabeth see Hutter, "Die Homilien," 185–92, Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 73–76.

can share in her cousin's joy and witness the miracle of Zachariah's newfound voice (which permits him to further praise the Virgin).<sup>262</sup> This allows an elaborate composition centered on motherhood to be included in the illustration of the homily (fig. 30). It comprises four scenes: the first and last depict Mary in dialogue with Zachariah, while the other two depict the nativity of John the Baptist and Elizabeth breast-feeding the newborn child in front of a group of obedient maids.<sup>263</sup> The latter episode is a striking addition, since the homily makes no reference to nursing. Indeed, among the numerous Byzantine depictions of John's nativity known today, only the Kokkinobaphos manuscript illustrates Elizabeth breast-feeding him.<sup>264</sup> This scene highlights both motherhood and the miraculous nature of Elizabeth's fertility despite her advanced age.<sup>265</sup> This

262 Homily 6.28–33, PG 127:689A–693D. Iakobos analyzes the wording of Luke 1:56–57 and claims that Mary's presence at the birth of John the Baptist is also implied in the Gospel account. For more details see note 267 below.

263 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 159r (Stornajolo, *Omélies de Giacomo monaco*, pl. 67); the miniature might have been included in the Paris copy as well, but currently this codex is missing the relevant pages (see Linardou, "Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited," 403–4).

264 I am not aware of any text that mentions John's breast-feeding (it is absent from the *Protevangelion* and the Gospels; I have not examined homilies in honor of the Forerunner). For a detailed list of the surviving depictions of John's nativity and a discussion of its iconography and popularity see A. Katsioti, *Οι σκηνές της ζωής και ο εικονογραφικός κύκλος του Αγίου Ιωάννη Προδρόμου στη Βυζαντινή Τέχνη* (Athens, 1998), 48–60 (p. 57 for the uniqueness of the breast-feeding episode in Vat. gr. 1162; Katsioti lists 65 nativity scenes, including one Coptic and five Armenian examples). In addition, Lafontaine-Dosogne mentions a devotional image from the thirteenth century (not a nativity narrative) in which both Anna and Elizabeth appear next to each other breast-feeding their infants. See *Iconographie de l'enfance de la Vierge* (n. 7 above).

265 There are well-known precedents emphasizing breast-feeding in the stories of women who miraculously became mothers in old age. For example, in Genesis 21:6–7, Sarah rejoices at the birth of Isaac, and mentions her ability to breast-feed as evidence of her miraculous fertility. The episode is not illustrated in the Byzantine Octateuchs, but it appears in a miniature of the ninth-century Paris. gr. 923, fol. 368v, illustrating a chapter of this florilegium "on joy and gladness." See K. Weitzmann, *The Miniatures of the Sacra Parallela: Parisinus Graecus 923* (Princeton, 1979), 42, fig. 31. Also discussed by M. Evangelatou, "Word and Image in the *Sacra Parallela* (codex Parisinus graecus 923)," *DOP* 62 (2008): 169, n. 256. An even more emphatic reference to breast-feeding as evidence of a miraculous motherhood in old age appears in relation to Anna in the *Protevangelion*. The narrator presents Anna nursing Mary after her birth, and again after she takes her daughter back to her chambers,

can be considered a fitting preamble to Mary's miraculous motherhood, so that the birth of the Forerunner prepares the way for the incarnation of Christ.

The sixth Kokkinobaphos homily also states that after Mary returned to Joseph's house and was submitted to the test of chastity (through a ritual prescribed in Numbers 5:11–31), she was sent back to Elizabeth's house to await the results of the trial.<sup>266</sup> This is a significant departure from the *Protevangelion*, which describes Mary as being sent to the mountains after undergoing the ritual.<sup>267</sup> In the Kokkinobaphos narrative, the second meeting between the Virgin and Elizabeth gives the author the opportunity to further exalt both women: Zachariah's wife receives Mary with praises for her extraordinary purity and divine motherhood. Thus the homilist commends Elizabeth for her unshaken faith and uses her as a reliable witness of Mary's chastity. Both manuscripts illustrate this part of the homily with a two-part miniature: on the left Elizabeth receives Mary in her home (both women stand at the threshold of the house in the presence of maids and a temple clerk); on the right Elizabeth

following the blessing of the temple priests. At that moment Anna mentions twice that breast-feeding her child is proof of God's favor. Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha* (n. 9 above) 11, 13 (chaps. 5–6). The Kokkinobaphos homiliaries (both text and images) do not depict Anna breast-feeding Mary, perhaps because the intention was to present her birth and childhood as exceptional, and therefore removed from the quotidian experiences of ordinary infants. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie de l'enfance de la Vierge*, 100–101, 134–35, mentions only two surviving examples of Anna breast-feeding Mary as part of the life cycle of the Virgin, and a few more cases of independent devotional depictions of Anna breast-feeding Mary. For an overview of the motif of breast-feeding in Byzantine imagery, with extensive references to relevant scholarly literature, see Meyer, *Imaging Women's Reality* (n. 171 above), 81–88.

266 This part of the homily is not published in PG, but in Hutter, "Die Homilien" (n. 1 above), vol. 2, Appendix 1, 17–18 (Vat. gr. 1162, fols. 188r–v).

267 Tischendorf, *Evangelia Apocrypha* (n. 9 above), 29–30 (chap. 16). In the *Protevangelion* and in the Kokkinobaphos homilies, both Mary and Joseph undergo the test (though Numbers 5 institutes it only for a woman suspected of unchastity). In the *Protevangelion* they are sent separately to a mountainous region (εἰς τὴν ὄρεινὴν) to await the results of the trial. Iakobos claims that this region refers to a location close to Jerusalem, where Elizabeth's house was, but he mentions only Mary (not Joseph) visiting Elizabeth during the trial period. It seems he bases his claim on Luke 1:39–40, the official Gospel narrative about the Virgin visiting Elizabeth after the annunciation. According to Luke, Zachariah's and Elizabeth's house was εἰς τὴν ὄρεινὴν.



praises the Virgin as the Mother of God (both women are seated inside the house, facing each other).<sup>268</sup>

Perhaps the most surprising novelty introduced in the sixth Kokkinobaphos homily to highlight Elizabeth's extraordinary faith is a lengthy passage following the first Visitation miniature. In it Elizabeth is said to surpass all the major patriarchs of the Old Testament because, unlike them, she did not require divine proof to believe in God's power. An extensive passage, accompanied by a miniature, describes how even Abraham, who was willing to sacrifice his own son to obey God's will, had requested proof of the divine promise that the land of Canaan would become his (Genesis 15:7–17). In contrast, Elizabeth, prompted by the movement of John the Baptist in her womb, and by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, immediately recognized Mary as the Mother of God.<sup>269</sup>

Both the text and the miniatures of the sixth Kokkinobaphos homily systematically and insistently highlight Elizabeth as a shining example of piety, faith, and motherhood, making her a prominent positive model of female identity. This could have been understood by Eirene not only as a high standard of responsibility, but also as an inspirational example of female ethos and success, promoting a sense of empowerment and self-worth.

268 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 188v (Stornajolo, *Omélie di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 81); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 252v (Omont, *Homélies du moine Jacques*, pl. XXIX).

269 Homily 6.22–27, PG 127: 684C–689B. Abraham's sacrifice is illustrated in Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 156v (Stornajolo, *Omélie di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 66); the Paris codex is missing the relevant pages (see Linardou, "Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited," 403–4). It is noteworthy that George of Nikomedeia, whose sermons Iakobos used extensively as sources, made a similar comparison to highlight the superior faith of a New Testament figure, but his subject of praise was male rather than female: George contrasted Abraham's disbelief and need of proof for the promise of divine favors (including his possession of Canaan) to Joachim's immediate and heartfelt belief of the news that his wife would bear a child (PG 100:1389). It is possible that this passage inspired Iakobos's juxtaposition of Abraham and Elizabeth, significantly redirecting his praises from a male to a female figure so as to promote the theme of exalted motherhood and celebration of exemplary women central in the homilies. It should also be noted that according to the Gospel narrative, Elizabeth's enthusiastic recognition of Mary's divine pregnancy (guided by the reaction of her unborn male child) proves John's mother to be more faithful and divinely inspired than her husband: Zachariah requested proof to believe the news of his wife's unexpected pregnancy, and was struck mute by the annunciating angel until John the Baptist was born. See Luke 1:5–23.

It is noteworthy that Anna, the virtuous mother of the Virgin, Rebecca, the loving and cunning mother of Jacob, and Eve, the mother of all humankind, are depicted identically in the Kokkinobaphos miniatures (cf. figs. 4, 5, 6, and 11). Since female physiognomy does not vary greatly in the miniatures, the style and color of clothing and hair are crucial to the identification of characters.<sup>270</sup> These three mothers wear exactly the

270 For a detailed physiognomic identification of male figures in the Kokkinobaphos codices by the color and shape of beard and hair, see Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion* (n. 103 above), 115–18. In comparison the female figures are rather similar, differing mainly in clothing, e.g., the imperial attire of female saints in fig. 3, or the wearing of veils. Mary and other exemplary mothers appear veiled, while maids and Eve during her life are unveiled. Eve is veiled only in Hades, waiting for or witnessing the anastasis. This suggests the veil confers respectability, implying modesty and a higher social status (in the case of ladies versus maids). If it is also a marker of married versus unmarried women, the fact that Mary always appears veiled, even as a child, could suggest that she is Christ's bride in all stages of her life. The lack of physiognomic differentiation among female figures seems to suggest a shared female nature with limited individuality and agency. It is hard to say, however, whether this was an intentional pictorial choice or simply the result of iconographic conventions (that some Byzantine viewers might have interpreted as a statement about femininity): women lack the facial hair that allows for differentiation between men, and the hair of veiled or crowned women is covered, concealing any age difference. This limits the visual identification/differentiation of women to their clothing, and since most female protagonists wear a tunic and *maphorion*, the color of the clothes becomes paramount. Skin color is also used as a means of differentiation: Anna and Elizabeth have darker skin in comparison to the fair maids and the Virgin, indicating their advanced age. Since Rebecca, another older mother, is represented with fair skin, like her son Jacob and her maids, perhaps a light female complexion was used in the miniatures to indicate the moral maturity that the crafty Rebecca lacks. On the other hand, Rebecca's plotting in favor of Jacob is traditionally praised (discussed above). Is the depiction of her as a younger woman simply an oversight on the part of the miniaturist, or is it a choice meant to undermine her status as an insightful and mature mother? Or perhaps the youthful depiction made her a compelling model for Eirene, who might similarly have been plotting to advance her son to the imperial throne (a theme to be treated in my forthcoming article [n. 141 above])? Eve's skin tone presents another interesting puzzle. Although she is depicted younger than Adam after the fall (her hair remains dark while his has become grey in the Lamentation scene (compare figs. 7, 8, and 10), her skin tone is similar to his throughout the miniatures so that she always appears darker in comparison to the fair Virgin. Since Eve's identity was so negatively charged in the eyes of male Christians, including the producers of the Kokkinobaphos homilies, perhaps her darker complexion indicates both age (after all she is the oldest woman in human history), and her moral failings, making her the antithesis of the pure and fair Mary.

same red *maphorion* and light blue tunic, which makes them look alike despite their very different actions and moral characters. In Eirene's mind this might have been a sign of the exalted nature of motherhood in human history, which is not undermined by the wide range of moral potential exemplified by these three women. In the mind of the male producers of the codex, perhaps the opposite message was intended: that Rebecca and even the blessed Anna herself are daughters of Eve; and Mary (whose clothing is very similar, but not identical, in color to that of the other women) and Elizabeth (who wears dark colors, perhaps suggesting a more ascetic life, appropriate for the mother of John the Baptist) are the only ones who do not share in Eve's guilt since they gave birth to sons who reversed the damage done by the first mother.<sup>271</sup>

### Mother Earth and the Mother of God

The sixth homily's miniature, illustrating Mary's journey to Elizabeth's house, presents another powerful depiction of femininity open to contradictory interpretations (fig. 27).<sup>272</sup> The Virgin appears seated in the midst of a paradisiacal landscape, turning toward the young Jacob, who climbs a tree to procure fruits for her meal.<sup>273</sup> Behind the Theotokos, in the lower left corner of the miniature, a personification of the earth emerges from the ground, venerating the Virgin with outstretched hands. The same personification emerges from the horizontal bar of the initial letter Γ of the word Γῆ (earth) that introduces the relevant homiletic passage—an elaborate hymn in which Mother Earth praises the mother of God as the instrument of the incarnation through which all of creation will

be renewed. The Virgin is hailed as the most precious flower and fruit, and her mother, Earth, is exalted for generating a glorious offspring who will cleanse the world of idolatry, sin, and fruitlessness.<sup>274</sup> A woman like Eirene could have perceived this eulogy and the accompanying miniature as an inspiring and empowering reference to female nature, exalted through traditional conceptions of motherhood and fertility, and elevated into a symbol of universal renewal and salvation that obliterates Eve's transgression. The naked personification of earth in this paradisiacal setting could evoke the first human mother, but a female viewer might choose to read the composition in a positive light, focusing on the earthly mother's pride in bearing the pure mother of the heavenly king.

Both the text and the miniature, however, contain subtle elements that could promote an alternative reading, one more consistent with the dominant patriarchal discourse of Byzantine culture that exalted Mary as the exception among women, who were otherwise identified with Eve: the homiletic text emphasizes that the earth still suffers the impurity of idolatry and the weight of sinfulness that Christ will obliterate in the future.<sup>275</sup> The naked figure of Earth, with prominent uncovered breasts, multiple arm bracelets, and long hair, derives from the iconography of ancient polytheistic deities, and would have reminded Byzantine viewers of the idolatrous context of that imagery.<sup>276</sup> Thus

274 Homily 6.16, PG 127:676C–677D.

275 Iakobos is very precise in his use of the present or future tense as he composes the praises Earth addresses to the Virgin: in “her own words” Earth states that she is purified *in the present* through contact with the Godbearer (PG 127:677C–D), but will be finally saved and cleansed from all impurities *in the future*, after the incarnation of God himself is complete (PG 127:676C–677A). For this reason, and because of the subtle iconographic elements discussed below, I disagree with Hutter, “Die Homilien,” 182, who claims that Earth is a personification of the newly redeemed creation. I agree that the whole miniature suggests universal renewal through the incarnation, and that it makes eschatological allusions to the paradise reopened through Mary's son (*ibid.*, 179–85). At the same time, I see the personification of the earth as a visual reference to the ongoing process toward that ultimate goal, because the internal time of the narrative unfolds before Christ's birth and mission on earth, and the external time of the author's world predates the second coming of Christ.

276 See Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion* (n. 103 above), 62. Throughout the book Maguire discusses the ambivalence toward nature in Byzantine culture: as God's creation it was considered positive, and it was sanctified through the incarnation, but as part of the material world it had the potential for transience and corruptibility. The

271 It is possible that the emphasis on Elizabeth's piety, faith, and foresight in Mary's divine motherhood also relates to the monastic identity of the author of the homilies: as the mother of John the Baptist, who was also a prominent model of ascetic life, she joins her son in preparing the way for the coming of Christ.

272 Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 147r (Stornajolo, *Omélie di Giacomo monaco*, pl. 64); Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 200r (Omont, *Homélies du moine Jacques*, pl. XXV). Discussed by Hutter, “Die Homilien,” 179–85, Hutter and Canart, *Das Marienhomiliar*, 72–73.

273 The paradisiacal allusions are obvious (compare figs. 7, 8, 11, 13, and 27): similar plants and the presence of a river personification relate this landscape to the depiction of paradise in the Kokkinobaphos codices. As Hutter has observed (see previous note), this visual allusion highlights the references to the salvation of the world through the incarnation.

the interpretation of the personification of earth would not have been unambiguously positive for all viewers. Especially in a monastic environment, hostile to female sexuality, this naked female figure with prominent sagging breasts could have had a sinister aspect.<sup>277</sup> In fact, the miniaturist created a stark contrast between the fully dressed, modest, centrally seated Mary, and the naked, marginalized, half-figure of Earth emerging from the ground. In addition, the Virgin turns her back to Mother Earth and looks away, as if to suggest that she is aware of her presence, but rejects her immodesty. These iconographic elements were perhaps intended to

naked personification of the earth in this Kokkinobaphos miniature may suggest an ambivalent attitude toward nature, even if the composition presents a paradisiacal landscape with allusions to salvation. Maguire (ibid., 62) considers this image “the most direct illustration of the sanctification of nature in Byzantine art,” yet he seems to recognize a possible negative implication when he describes Earth as “penitent.”

277 No other female figure in the Kokkinobaphos homilies appears with such breasts: Eve or the female figures of the damned in Hades are rendered with minimal pectoral definition (figs. 7, 8, 10, 11). Earth’s prominent sagging breasts might be a reference to fertility, but in a Byzantine religious context, hostile to idolatry, female nudity, and the polytheistic visual traditions associated with them, it is more likely that such anatomical specificity was intended negatively. Useful comparative material survives in the visual production of Western Europe. For example, sagging breasts bitten by snakes are common in the representation of the personification of luxuria (lust), also known as the *femme aux serpents* in scholarly literature. This iconography developed out of ancient representations of terra (earth) nursing her children, but in the medieval context of the moral condemnation of lust, the breasts of the female figure are not firm and nurturing, but sagging (as if void of life in physical and spiritual terms). For an overview of the iconography of Luxuria, see A. Luyster, “The Femme aux Serpents at Moissac: Luxuria, Lust or a Bad Mother?” in *Between Magic and Religion: Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and Society*, ed. S. Asirvatham, C. O. Pache, and J. Watrous (Oxford, 2001), 165–92, esp. 174–75. Another interesting use of sagging breasts as a sign of moral decadence seems to be present in the depiction of Eve in the thirteenth-century mosaics of the Creation cupola in San Marco, Venice: while Eve’s breasts appear firm, small, and tightly held together when she is first created by God, they progressively sag and become farther apart as Eve is tempted by the serpent, eats the fruit, covers her nudity, and responds to God’s reproach. Compare pls. 7 and 11 and figs. 20, 21, and 24 in Howell Jolly, *Made in God’s Image?* (n. 166 above). Although Jolly doesn’t make this observation about Eve’s breasts, her insightful iconographic analysis offers many examples of the very subtle employment of visual details in these mosaics to condemn Eve as the female responsible for the fall (esp. 28–58). In this context, the slight variations in the depiction of Eve’s breasts were probably intentional and highly significant.

problematize the female personification by evoking the Eve-Mary binary and juxtaposing the all-pure Virgin with a threatening or at least inferior representation of femininity. In this light, Earth’s gesture toward the Theotokos looks less like thankful veneration than an anxious plea.<sup>278</sup> Both men and women could have read the image in this way, yet it is reasonable to assume that at least some women might have preferred the more positive interpretation of fertility and motherhood discussed above, even if the male producers of the homilies would have embraced a reading that promotes an implicitly critical view of women by emphasizing Mary’s exceptional nature and status.

My analysis is not intended to suggest that Eirene was impervious to the negative statements about female nature that seem to have been directed at her by the producers of the Kokkinobaphos homilies. I simply suggest that she might have processed them in a more fluid way, one that perhaps allowed her to find some positive meaning in them. For example, the assertion that women are immature and vulnerable to temptation (a potential reading of the age difference between Adam and Eve introduced after the eating of the fruit) undeniably aims to justify female subordination to male authority and castigate female nature. But a woman like Eirene could have decided to embrace the idea that complying with the cultural requirement to submit to the authority and protection of a male was a privilege and afforded an opportunity to gain respect and prestige by being an exemplary and honored wife and mother. Likewise, Mary is often depicted in the Kokkinobaphos miniatures as the only exalted woman in a world of powerful men. This is the case, for example, in the frontispiece to the first homily, where she is the only female at Christ’s ascension (fig. 2);<sup>279</sup> or in the miniature where prophets and angels venerate the enthroned Virgin in paradise (fig. 13). Similarly, in the miniature of the congregation of saints gathered to honor the feast of Mary’s conception, most of the holy participants are male, and only one of the five categories of saints depicted in groups is female (fig. 3, lower right). Yet in all these

278 In the words of Henry Maguire (*Nectar and Illusion*, 62): “Earth appears almost as a penitent.”

279 This is also the first miniature of the Vatican codex, which was probably produced for Eirene. In the Paris codex, probably produced for Iakobos, the Ascension is preceded by the miniature of the author with his patristic models. See 291 above.



images Mary is in a central position among powerful men. In the Ascension miniature she is directly below Christ, exalted as his mother and humanity's most powerful intercessor. And in the other two miniatures she is the only enthroned figure among standing attendants, the woman venerated by all. In other words, she is a female that through the traditional role of motherhood gained status superior to all other humans and is honored even by the most powerful of men.<sup>280</sup>

### Gender Construction and the Promise of Salvation in the Anastasis

I would like to close this exploration of the dynamic contradictions and interpretative potential of gender tensions in the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries by discussing the miniature that narrates Christ's descent to the underworld to liberate the just (fig. 11). The top register depicts him entering the realm of death and trampling Hades, while an angel turns away naked sinners. In the middle register Christ guides the just, led by Adam and Eve, out of the underworld and into paradise. Another group of the just appears in the bottom register, raising their arms and eyes toward Christ, while at the left Mary is depicted enthroned in paradise, flanked by angelic attendants and venerated by the standing Adam and the prostrate Eve, who recognize that their salvation was made possible by her role in the incarnation (an idea expressed clearly in the accompanying homily).

The liberation of the just is based on the typical Byzantine iconography of the anastasis, with the addition of the depiction of paradise. It is important to note that the anastasis, the most emblematic representation of human salvation in Byzantine visual culture, has a very marked gender and class message: Eve is the only woman among the saved; and the messianic ancestors and prophets David and Solomon are distinguished by attire that marks them as Byzantine emperors (all the other males wear generic and antiquated chiton and himation that distance them from the Byzantine viewers). This iconography suggests a privileged moral status for the Byzantine emperors, who by proxy are included

among the saved.<sup>281</sup> At the same time, the scene also underlines Eve's culpability and the inferiority of women by presenting the foremother as the only female among the saved. She either stands behind Adam, or on Christ's left, while Adam occupies the more honorable right.<sup>282</sup> In addition, in many anastasis images,

281 Again it is possible to suggest an alternative interpretation that does not focus on the class statement we perceive as external observers: the two prophets who look like Byzantine emperors are not just representatives of the most powerful persons in Byzantine society; they are representatives of the entire empire and its people, reflecting the special status of the Byzantines as the chosen people of God, led by kings who are representatives of Christ on earth and at the same time represent their subjects in front of God's throne. After all, the imperial attire of David and Solomon is the only culture-specific clothing among all the just. I think that both the class-related and the culture-related interpretations are valid and certainly do not preclude one another; they could have operated simultaneously or alternatively in the conscious or subconscious mind of the Byzantine viewers, who could favor one, the other, or both, depending on their ideological background, class identity, and individual interests. For the theological significance of the emphatic depiction of David and Solomon in the anastasis iconography as a reference to the royal ancestors of Christ and prophets of the resurrection, see Kartsonis, *Anastasis* (n. 35 above), 55–60. The imperial attire certainly helps to identify the two royal prophets among the other just, but since David and Solomon were also considered models of the Byzantine emperors, the image acquires additional political ramifications of the class- and culture-related nature I have suggested above.

282 Kartsonis, *Anastasis* includes several examples of both iconographic types. Eve behind Adam: figs. 24g, 25b, 26b, 37b, 44a, 45, 50, 51, 53, 58, 61, 62, 63, 64, 67, 68 (the Vatican Kokkinobaphos) 69, 70, 71a, 72b, 80, 81, 83, 85. Adam on Christ's right, Eve on his left: figs. 28, 52, 54, 87. An exception is the ninth-century depiction in the Chludov Psalter, fol. 82v, (*ibid.*, fig. 44b), where Eve is on Christ's right and Adam on his left, but Christ pulls the first man by the hand and only makes a speaking gesture toward the first woman. Although the images in Kartsonis's monograph are not comprehensive, they suggest that in Byzantine visual culture the preferred iconography was that of Eve behind Adam and Christ raising the first man by his hand but not touching Eve. This version of the iconography emphasizes gender hierarchy more clearly than the one with Christ raising both Adam and Eve, with the man on his right and the woman on his left. It is worth noting that when Eve stands behind Adam, he sometimes kneels while she stands like the rest of the just (both Adam and Eve might kneel when they flank Christ). This difference between a kneeling man and an upright woman seems to emphasize Adam's fall due to his wife, a disgrace that during the anastasis is reversed by the triumph of the new Adam. Indeed, it was Adam's lack of resistance to Eve's proposal that sealed the fate of humankind after the consumption of the forbidden fruit. However, this iconographic detail is open to contradictory interpretations, depending on the perspective of the viewer: Adam's pose perhaps emphasizes his guilt, but it could also be taken to highlight his salvation: he is being

280 For the exceptional iconographic detail of Mary enthroned on her own (rather than with the Child Christ as in standard Byzantine iconography) in the miniatures that present the saints and Adam and Eve honoring her (figs. 3 and 11), see n. 293 below.

including some important monumental depictions, Eve is the only human to have her hands covered in the folds of her *maphorion* as she raises them in supplication toward Christ.<sup>283</sup> This significant detail suggests that she is less worthy than the men to approach and address Christ: she must be humbler and more contrite, because she is ultimately the one responsible for introducing sin and death into the human condition.

That Eve is the only female depicted in the Byzantine anastasis seems to present a rather one-dimensional view of femininity. Are all women like Eve, who brought death to humankind through her disobedience? Is she an adequate representative of the entire female sex, which is monolithic and limited to one single identity? It is difficult not to consider this a negative assessment of femininity, one that consciously or subconsciously would have influenced the self-perception of Byzantine women and men. Could female viewers still see in this iconography a positive link between Christ and Eve's sin, which led to the miracle of the incarnation? Although this is possible, I am inclined to believe that in the context of the defeat of death that the anastasis presents, the most prominent message, if not the only one, is Eve's culpability in introducing death into humanity's fate.

It should be noted, however, that occasionally iconographic details were included in an anastasis representation to accommodate the possibility of a more positive assessment of Eve. Here I will mention only the example of the famous eleventh-century mosaic in Nea Moni, Chios, decorated under the patronage of Emperor Constantine IX Monomachos (fig. 12). Doula Mouriki has observed that in the anastasis mosaic Solomon resembles Constantine, who received his title through marriage to the porphyrogete Zoe.<sup>284</sup> Another striking detail of this composition, not yet given due attention, is the use of prominent golden highlights only for Christ's blue mantle and Eve's red *maphorion*, which creates a striking and unique visual connection between them. The royal forefathers

raised toward God in a composition that is dominated by men and includes a single culpable woman.

283 Kartsonis, *Anastasis*, figs. 51–54 (miniatures), 58 (Torcello mosaic), 67 (wall painting in St. Barbara, Soğanli, Cappadocia), 68 (the Vatican Kokkinobaphos), 72b, 80 (miniatures), 81 (Nea Moni mosaic), 83 (Hosios Loukas mosaic), 85 (Daphni mosaic).

284 D. Mouriki, *The Mosaics of Nea Moni on Chios* (Athens, 1985), 136–39.

David and Solomon wear golden crowns and gold-embroidered *chlamys*, but they are not enveloped in the golden light that shines on Christ's and Eve's clothes. Indeed these two figures are linked almost as mother and son, in the same way that golden highlights relate Mary and Christ in traditional Byzantine depictions of the Theotokos holding her child. Since gold is a signifier of divinity, illumination, and triumph, its use in the Nea Moni anastasis seems to suggest that human nature was deified in Christ as a consequence of Eve's actions (both her sin and her motherhood). As the first woman is engulfed in the light of her divine descendant, human history comes full circle: the son of Mary exalts motherhood and female nature above all of creation as he saves his foremother from death. One might wonder whether the dedication of the monastery to Mary, and the role of empress Zoe, who delegated the imperial office to Constantine, contributed to this exceptional depiction of Eve, the first influential woman and mother of all earthly empresses and the queen of heaven.<sup>285</sup>

The iconography of the anastasis miniatures in the Kokkinobaphos codices is more complex than the standard Byzantine version (fig. 11).<sup>286</sup> As usual, Eve is the only woman among the just and she follows Christ behind Adam, with her hands covered. At the same time, the painter has made sure that at least three of the

285 See also H. Maguire, "The Mosaics of Nea Moni: An Imperial Reading," *DOP* 46 (1992): 205–14. Maguire suggests that the selection, placement, and iconography of four major Christological episodes (nativity, baptism, crucifixion, and resurrection) in the *katholikon* of Nea Moni were meant to cultivate a connection between Christ and emperor Constantine Monomachos, who provided the funds to build and decorate this monastic church and was the monks' benefactor. Such imperial references were a form of self-aggrandizement for Constantine and a way for the monks to thank their patron. As Maguire has shown, the monks "were not provincial ascetics but worldly courtiers, evidently well versed in the sophisticated arts of flattery and ingratiation that won them imperial largess" (*ibid.*, 214). If my analysis of the depiction of Eve is correct, it might suggest that the monks hoped to flatter not only Constantine but also empress Zoe (even though an allusion to her through Eve can be considered to have both positive and negative implications). After all, they were also in her debt, since she was the one to fulfill their prophecy that Constantine would ascend to the throne and thus she was ultimately responsible for his ability to thank the monks and fulfill his promise to support them by building the church and offering them privileges. (For the prophecy and the imperial gifts that followed it, see *ibid.*, 207, 213.)

286 All the following elements appear in both manuscripts.

naked sinners in the top register are marked as women; the other naked figures have identical musculature and unidentified genitalia and seem to be of indeterminate sex.<sup>287</sup> The presence of at least three women among the sinners, in combination with their absence among the just, seems intended to emphasize the sinfulness of the female sex. In addition, a diminutive Eve is depicted prostrate before Mary in paradise, while a more sizeable Adam stands behind her; it is as if Eve alone is humbly asking forgiveness for her sin from the woman who contributed to her absolution. At the same time Eve's posture is also that of a *ktetor* (patron/commissioner) depicted in the act of venerating the saint to whom a holy offering is made.<sup>288</sup>

An interesting detail of this miniature might have been intended to support the *ktetor* reading, which suggests a connection between Eve and Eirene: the first mother and her husband are painted touching the lower red border of the miniature, invading the golden margin that usually appears intact at the bottom of the Kokkinobaphos miniatures, close to the red frame of the composition. Thus the first parents appear closer to the viewer, perhaps to indicate that they venerate Mary on behalf of all humankind.<sup>289</sup> Could this also be a reference to Eirene being introduced into the miniature through the figure of Eve?<sup>290</sup> And could Eirene's husband also be present in Adam, visualizing the wish for the two spouses to enter paradise together? Regardless of whether the codex was produced before or after

Andronikos's death in 1142, the desire for a reunion in heaven would be appropriate in an image aiming to capture the transcendence of time and space in the context of religious experience and faith in universal salvation. It is hard to determine if the proximity of specific figures to the lower red border of other Kokkinobaphos miniatures was haphazard or intentional, and whether they were meant to be connected to the viewer, but in some cases such an interpretation seems highly plausible.<sup>291</sup> In addition, it is possible that an attentive and insightful reader of the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries might have read them in this way regardless of the miniaturist's intention. It is also plausible that when the Vatican Kokkinobaphos was created, Eve's proximity to the miniature border, and thus to the viewer's realm, was intended to turn her into a representative of Eirene prostrate before Mary's throne.

The details of this composition could suggest not only that the male producers of the codex were making a negative comment about female nature, but that they related the humbled and culpable foremother to the female commissioner of the codex, suggesting to her that she is undeniably Eve's daughter rather than Mary's sister, and that the Virgin's status is out of reach for any woman. It is hard to imagine that Eirene could have ignored such negative statements, but it is also possible that, to a certain extent, she could have interpreted what she saw more positively. For example, the prostrate Eve appears much closer to Mary's throne than Adam does, and the color scheme of the two women's clothing, even though it is not identical, underlines their

287 In the first group of naked sinners (closer to Christ), the last figure has long hair, and a short line drawn on her crotch indicates her female sex. The same detail characterizes the first sinner of the second group as a woman. The figure with arms crossed on the chest (perhaps a gesture intended to hide her breasts) does not seem to have this line on the crotch, but her long hair may identify her as a woman.

288 On the iconography of *ktetor* (donor/commissioner) portraits, usually shown prostrate before holy figures, see the references in Linardou, "Kokkinobaphos Manuscripts Revisited" (n. 1 above), 388–89, n. 23.

289 This iconographic detail appears both in the Vatican and the Paris copies. The suggested reading (the devotion of all humanity to Mary, visualized through Adam and Eve) is compatible with the hypothesis that one codex was owned by a woman (Eirene) and the other by a man (Iakobos). The possibility, discussed below, that Eve makes more specific reference to Eirene is particularly appropriate for the Vatican copy, which was produced first and was in all probability destined for the sebastokratorissa.

290 I thank Ioli Kalavrezou for suggesting this possible interpretation to me.

291 The case of St. James (Iakobos the apostle) accompanying Mary as a witness of her purity and as a metonym of the Kokkinobaphos author has been discussed above. In that instance, James clearly stands out among the other figures due to his proximity to the lower red border of the composition. There are a few similar cases. When Mary is dedicated to the temple, the feet of many figures participating in the procession actually step on and beyond the lower red border, in a sense spilling out of the miniature and invading the viewer's space, perhaps to suggest that the contemporary Byzantines join them in celebrating Mary's extraordinary role in human salvation. (The miniature appears only in Vat. gr. 1162, fol. 59v [Stornajolo, *Omélie di Giacomo Monaco* (n. 1 above), pl. 24].) In the frontispiece to the second homily in the Vatican Kokkinobaphos, Jacob's ladder touches the lower miniature border, perhaps to imply that Mary is the bridge that links the world of the viewers with heaven (fig. 5). In the Paris copy the ladder does not intrude into the lower golden margin of the miniature and does not touch the red border (Paris. gr. 1208, fol. 29v [Omont, *Homélies du moine Jacques* (n. 1 above), pl. IV]).



relationship.<sup>292</sup> After all, Mary herself is Eve's daughter, and Eve is Mary's mother, and through her the mother of Christ. Eirene might have felt honored by seeing herself in Eve's shoes, venerating the Theotokos at a proximity that no other human figure enjoys (with the exception of Christ). Besides, even the male producers of the manuscript made concessions to the positive potential of female identity by presenting Mary regally enthroned in paradise as the Mother of God and the vehicle of the incarnation that made salvation possible.<sup>293</sup>

Indeed the figure of Eve in the middle register of this composition appears to be a nodal point in the complex web of contradictions that characterize human nature and gender relations: Christ takes the first man by the hand (and the two are dressed in

292 As in all the other miniatures, Mary wears a dark blue *maphorion* and dark red tunic, while Eve is dressed in a bright red *maphorion* and light blue tunic. The very similar colors are reversed, perhaps to suggest that the figures are polar opposites. Once again, depending on the viewer, the reading could emphasize how female nature is redeemed and exalted through Mary, or how Mary alone is a positive example of femininity, the opposite of Eve and her daughters. In the upper register of the same miniature Christ's and Adam's clothing colors are exactly the same, but again reversed. Here, too, a reference to the salvation of the old Adam by the new, who reverses his fate, might have been intended.

293 It is worth noting that this depiction of Mary enthroned is very rare in Byzantine imagery (and reappears in the miniature of Mary honored by the saints, fig. 3). According to Maria Parani, whom I thank for this valuable oral comment, usually the Virgin is enthroned only when she holds Christ in her hands, or at the moment she learns he is in her womb (the annunciation), because it is through him that she becomes queen of heaven. Indeed, as his mother and servant, she is regularly described as his throne in Byzantine literature, including the Kokkinobaphos homilies (see nn. 101 and 102 above). Against this cultural and visual background, Mary's enthronement without Christ in these two Kokkinobaphos miniatures becomes a particularly emphatic reference to her extraordinary status. Parani has not yet published her observation, but her word carries the authority of somebody who has studied numerous Byzantine representations of Mary enthroned, many of which appear in her *Reconstructing the Reality of Images: Byzantine Material Culture and Religious Iconography (11th–15th Centuries)* (Leiden and Boston, 2003), 160–67. It is possible that in the two miniatures under discussion Mary's solo enthronement echoes her appearance in Last Judgment scenes, in which she is enthroned in paradise while Christ presides as supreme judge in the top register; this also conveys her extraordinary status as humanity's most powerful intercessor. For an overview of this motif in the Byzantine iconography of the Last Judgment, including a reference to the two Kokkinobaphos miniatures, see H. Klein, "The So-Called Byzantine Diptych in the Winchester Psalter, British Library, MS Cotton Nero C. IV," *Gesta* 37, no. 1 (1998): 26–43.

identical colors in reverse, to underline the relationship between the new and old Adam). Eve comes second, but she is conspicuously larger than Adam and follows Christ in a prominently dynamic pose, not dragged by the hand, but raising her covered arms in supplication and veneration, while her red *maphorion* makes her stand out against the dark background. What message was intended by these details? Did emphasizing Eve, the first sinner, as the only woman among the just underline the culpability of women? Or did it highlight the role of the first woman as the ultimate ancestor of Christ, since the Logos Incarnate had a human mother from Eve's stock, but no human father? Could Eirene have preferred to interpret Eve's sin as the root of the miracle of the incarnation? The analysis of the anastasis mosaic in Nea Moni, a church dedicated to Mary by the husband of a powerful empress, seems to indicate that such a positive reading was possible, especially in the context of female patronage.



## Conclusions

This study is committed to approaching a complex and sophisticated creation like the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries in terms of potential. My intention is not to define what these manuscripts are, but to illuminate some of the things they could say to and about their original makers and users. The codices themselves provide a generic self-definition, introducing the material with the term λόγοι (λόγος appears at the beginning of the title of each homily); the homilies are, in other words, "orations" or "speeches," a definition that can accommodate a variety of functions and contexts. The Byzantines might have described them as βιβλία ψυχοφελή, books beneficial to the soul. After all, they dwell on the mysteries and wonders of divine incarnation and human salvation, they provide edifying reading for pious souls, and they present venerable models of behavior that promote religious, cultural, and social values. Depending on context and user, their function could have shifted from private and semi-private to more public settings, from individual to group audiences, monastic or imperial, male, female, or both. As a prominent Byzantine princess with an eventful life, possible political aspirations, and a powerful alignment

with the ideal of motherhood, Eirene could have found the Vatican copy useful in a variety of ways: in her private and public life, alone or in an exclusive circle of court members, in moments of prosperity or crisis, when seeking strength and guidance in the promise of human salvation and in the examples of influential and dignified mothers.<sup>294</sup> As a monk with literary aspirations and connections to the imperial court, Iakobos could have used the Paris copy in similarly varied ways, for the edification, glorification, or consolation of himself or his monastic community.

This multiplicity of possible uses is a direct result of and a testament to the multilayered sophistication of the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries, and their exceptionally rich textintervisual character. Designed to be multidimensional and polyvalent, the Kokkinobaphos codices may never be exhaustively studied, because they are meant to possess a depth that shifts in the eyes of the beholder. Here I have chosen to shed light on inter-related issues of theological symbolism and gender dynamics because they were central in the conception and perception of the codices, but in choosing this focus I am also guided by my personal interests and concerns. Other avenues of approach are equally valid in the layered world of the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries.

I set out on my exploration of this world with a few cautious thoughts in mind. While investigating the ideological construction of gender in past cultures we need to admit that definitive answers may be beyond our reach, but posing probing questions is still a meaningful endeavor. Exploring the potential of different interpretations, while keeping in mind the hypothetical nature of our assumptions, is perhaps the most fruitful approach to cultures far removed from ours. Especially in the case of visual productions, an openness to a variety of readings was often part of the original intended function and communicative power of the images: already from their inception, they were meant to accommodate multiple meanings that might become even more multilayered through time, enriched by the input of different users. As to contradictions, most of us know from personal experience that they are often a prominent part of our feelings and thoughts, so why

should we assume that they are absent in past cultures and creations produced by individuals at least as complex as ourselves?<sup>295</sup> Studied ambivalence or sophisticated multiplicity of meaning are among the most prominent and powerful features of Byzantine literary and visual culture. As an elaborate textintervisual creation of the highest order, the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries are characterized by dynamic contradictions that would have been appreciated by their original audience and can still fascinate researchers with intriguing questions without necessarily providing definitive answers.

The extent to which female and male viewers might have reacted differently to the Kokkinobaphos imagery is one such intriguing question open to discussion. Through the energetic interaction of their makers' and users' conceptions and perceptions, the homiliaries were activated as products and producers of a dynamic process of gender construction that encompassed both female empowerment and subordination. After all, its main role model was Mary, an emblematic figure of contradictions: she was the maternal virgin who was exalted for her humility, and was honored above all creation for being the obedient servant and human mother of God. In her, subordination and empowerment were closely interwoven, like warp and weft; they were as inseparable as the two sides of a coin. Byzantine men and women, whose gendered understanding of the female sex was influenced by Mary's cultural prominence and identity, held that coin in their hands, and even if they looked at only one side, they could still feel the other in their palm.<sup>296</sup>

Gender, as any type of identity, is a process, an ever-evolving becoming rather than a static being,<sup>297</sup> in constant flux between the pull of culture and

294 Some insights into the tribulations of Eirene's life and the possible ways the Kokkinobaphos homiliaries could have been relevant to her are included in Evangelatou, "Pursuing Salvation" (n. 129 above).

295 I refer the reader once more to the inspiring analysis by Bynum, "Why Paradox?" (n. 164 above).

296 A "gendered understanding of the female sex" refers to the basic tenet of feminist critics that sex is biological, while gender is socially and culturally constructed. For example, A. Oakley, *Sex, Gender and Society* (London, 1972); E. Fox-Genovese, "Placing Women's History in History," *New Leaf Review* 133 (1982): 5–29, esp. 14. Of course, even if the term "sex" is used to describe biological differences between men and women, sexuality is also socially and culturally constructed. See for example *Sexual Meaning: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality*, ed. S. Ortner and H. Whitehead (Cambridge, 1981).

297 S. Hall, "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation," *Framework* 36 (1989): 70.

personality, society and self.<sup>298</sup> No wonder its definitions and operations, especially in the study of past cultures, remain elusive. Perhaps the most solid conclusion I can offer at the end of this study is not about gender dynamics but about visual symbolism: regardless of their gendered self-perception, all Byzantine viewers would have been equally aware that the purple thread spun by the Virgin is a powerful symbol of the incarnation. We may assume that as members of a sophisticated textintervisual culture in which scriptural exegesis, typology, and iconographic symbolism were central, they would have recognized the multifaceted meanings of textiles and colors in religious texts and images, as well as in their social and personal lives. It was in the context of religious expression and experience that their interpretative awareness and potential were engaged and cultivated the most; and the Kokkinobaphos homilies are supreme examples of this cultural process, being themselves sophisticated products and producers of Byzantine culture.

Even if our gender readings of complex creations like the Kokkinobaphos manuscripts are only hypothetical, a final comment about the dynamics of gender seems in order at the end of an exploration equally concerned with theological symbolism and gender construction. I hope that the above evidence has demonstrated that gender was the catalyst for the production of these exceptional manuscripts and their thematic foci: the female identity and particular interests of a commissioner like Eirene Sebastokratorissa seem to have triggered the exceptional textual and visual exaltation of textile production as a supreme symbol of human salvation, and to have inspired a novel presentation of sacred history in order to give unprecedented prominence

to biblical and extra-biblical figures of motherhood, from Eve and Rebecca to Anna, Elizabeth, and mother Earth. Thus was created one of the most extraordinary Byzantine praises to the Virgin as the spinner and weaver of human salvation, as the supreme mother of humanity and divinity, and as the culmination of a long line of prominent female ancestors. Exactly how these themes were interpreted by the male producers of the homilies and their female and male readers remains an open question with many possible answers; but without the combined influence of Eirene's particular interests in maternity, textiles, and the color purple as prominent aspects of her life and as prestigious signifiers of power, these Marian homilies would have been very different, if produced at all.

The Kokkinobaphos codices are brilliant text-intervisual creations that express ideas deeply woven into the intricate fabric of Byzantine culture; but in addition to the collaboration of a well-versed author and an inventive miniaturist, it took the intervention of a female aristocratic commissioner to arrive at this exceptional result: she contributed both the funds and the personal aspirations and concerns that influenced, directly or indirectly, the creative process and its outcome. In this respect the Kokkinobaphos homilies clearly exemplify the serendipitous interaction between deep cultural foundations and unique historical and personal circumstances that lie at the root of any sophisticated cultural creation.

University of California,  
Santa Cruz  
Department of History of  
Art and Visual Culture  
D-201 Porter College  
1156 High Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95064  
maevang@ucsc.edu

298 For a reference to the contrasting yet coexisting pull of community and individuality within history and its study, see, for example, Bynum, "Why Paradox?" (with references to how she approached this issue in her own work).

SO THE IDEAS DISCUSSED IN THIS ARTICLE WERE first developed in the original draft for "The Purple Thread of the Flesh: The Theological Connotations of a Narrative Iconographic Element in Byzantine Images of the Annunciation," published in a shorter

version, without the Kokkinobaphos material, in *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium; Studies Presented to Robin Cormack*, ed. A. Eastmond and L. James (Aldershot, 2003), 261–79. As a Post-Doctoral Fellow at Dumbarton Oaks (2003–4, 2009–10), the



Program in Hellenic Studies at Princeton University (2004–5), the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto (2005–6), and the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University (2006–7), I dedicated part of my time to the study of the two Kokkinobaphos homiliaries, and I have now incorporated this material into a much larger project. I warmly

thank all four institutes for supporting my research. I am also grateful to the Art Research Institute of the University of California Santa Cruz for funding the expenses for the illustration of this article. I would like to thank V. Marinis and R. Roussanova for providing me with copies of bibliographic material necessary to complete this research.